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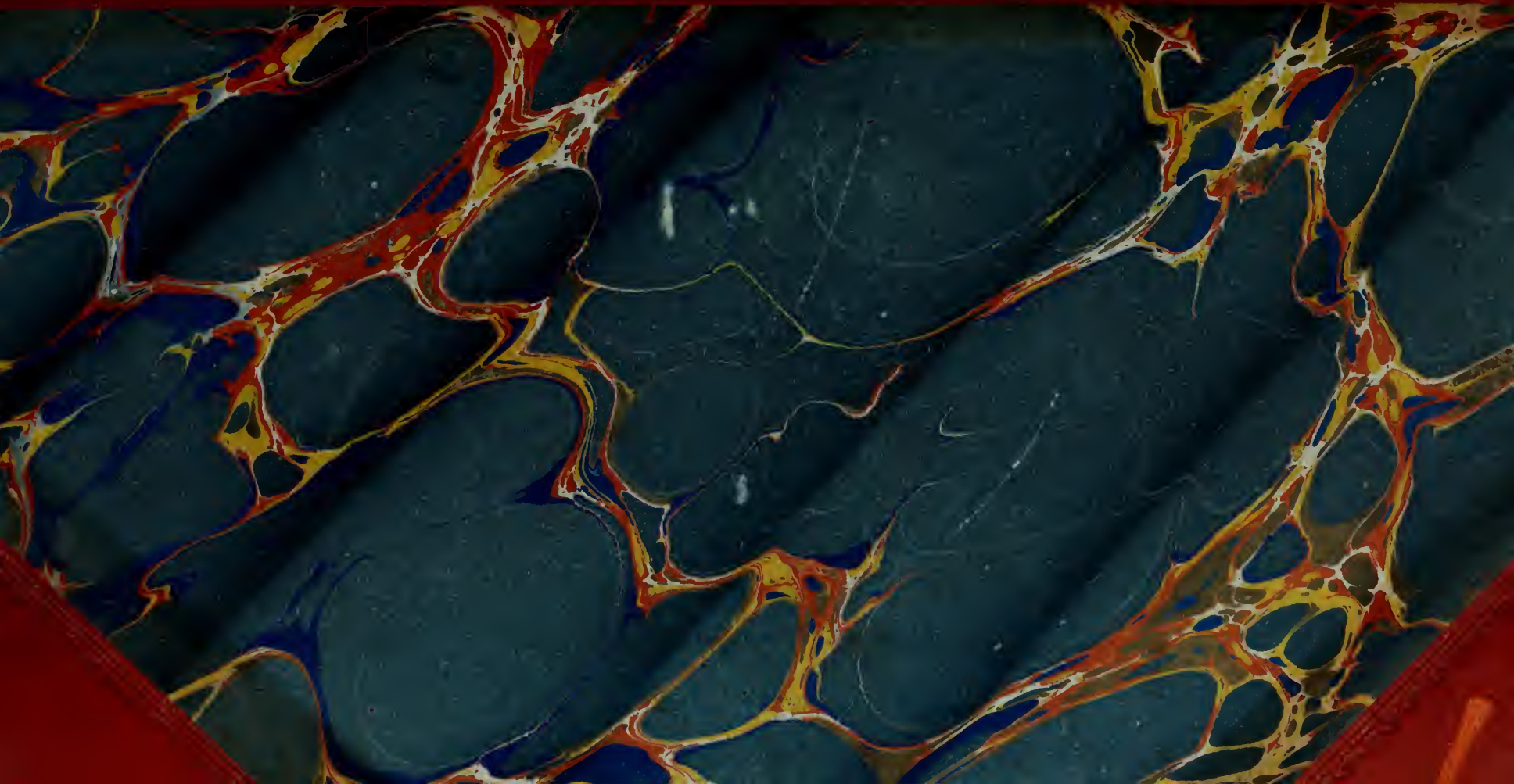

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M. L. GOW. R. TAYLOR.

I ADVANCED SLOWLY UP THE ROOM, STOPPED AND CURTSIED.

Page 31.

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

CHARLES W. WOOD.

VOLUME LI.

January to June, 1891.

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ILLUSTRATIONS.

By M. L. Gow.

"I advanced slowly up the room, stopped, and curtsied."
"I saw and recognised the mysterious midnight visitor."
"He came back in a few minutes, but so transformed in outward appearance that Ducie scarcely knew him."
"Behold!"
"Sister Agnes knelt for a few moments and bent her head in silent prayer."
"He put his hand to his side, and motioned Mirpah to open the letter."

Illustrations to "The Bretons at Home."

THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY, 1891.

THE SILENT CHIMES.

PUTTING THEM UP.

I HARDLY know whether to write this history, or not; for its events did not occur within my own recollection, and I can only relate them at second-hand—from the Squire and others. They are curious enough; especially as regards the three parsons—one following upon another—in their connection with the Monk family, causing no end of talk in Church Leet parish, as well as in other parishes within ear-shot.

About three miles' distance from Church Dykely, going northwards across country, was the rural parish of Church Leet. It contained a few farmhouses and some labourers' cottages. The church, built of grey stone, stood in its large grave-yard; the parsonage, a commodious house, was close by; both of them were covered with time-worn ivy. Nearly half a mile off, on a gentle eminence, rose the handsome mansion called Leet Hall, the abode of the Monk family. Nearly the whole of the parish—land, houses, church and all—belonged to them. At the time I am about to tell of they were the property of one man—Godfrey Monk.

The late owner of the place (except for one short twelvemonth) was old James Monk, Godfrey's father. Old James had three sons and one daughter—Emma—his wife dying early. The eldest son (mostly styled "young James") was about as wild a blade as ever figured in story; the second son, Raymond, was an invalid; the third, Godfrey, a reckless lad, ran away to sea when he was fourteen.

If the Monks were celebrated for one estimable quality more than another, it was temper: a cross-grained, imperious, obstinate temper. "Run away to sea, has he?" cried old James when he heard the news; "very well, at sea he shall stop." And at sea Godfrey did stop, not disliking the life, and perhaps not finding any other open to him. He worked his way up in the merchant service by degrees, until he became commander and was called Captain Monk.

The years went on. Young James died, and the other two sons grew to be middle-aged men. Old James, the father, found by signs and tokens that his own time was approaching; and he was the next to go. Save for a slender income bequeathed to Godfrey and to his daughter, the whole of the property was left to Raymond, and to Godfrey after him if Raymond had no son. The entail had been cut off in the past generation; for which act the reasons do not concern us.

So Raymond, ailing greatly always, entered into possession of his inheritance. He lived about a twelvemonth afterwards, and then died: died unmarried. Therefore Godfrey came into all.

People were curious, the Squire says, as to what sort of man Godfrey would turn out to be; for he had not troubled home much since he ran away. He was a widower; that much was known; his wife having been a native of Trinidad, in the West Indies.

A handsome man, with fair, curling hair (what was left of it); proud blue eyes; well-formed features with a chronic flush upon them, for he liked his glass, and took it; a commanding, imperious manner, and a temper uncompromising as the grave. Such was Captain Godfrey Monk; now in his forty-fifth year. Upon his arrival at Leet Hall after landing, with his children and one or two dusky attendants in their train, he was received by his sister Emma, Mrs. Carradyne. Major Carradyne had died fighting in India, and his wife, at the request of her brother Raymond, came then to live at Leet Hall. Not of necessity, for Mrs. Carradyne was well off and could have made her home where she pleased, but Raymond had liked to have her. Godfrey also expressed his pleasure that she should remain; she could act as mother to his children.

Godfrey's children were three: Katherine, aged seventeen; Hubert, aged ten; and Eliza, aged eight. The girls had their father's handsome features, but in their skin there ran a dusky tinge, hinting of other than pure Saxon blood; and they were every whit as haughtily self-willed as he was. The boy, Hubert, was extremely pretty, his face fair, his complexion delicately beautiful, his auburn hair bright, his manner winning; but he liked to exercise his own will, and appeared to have generally done it.

A day or two, and Mrs. Carradyne sat down aghast. "I never saw children so troublesome and self-willed in all my life, Godfrey," she said to her brother. "Have they ever been controlled at all?"

"Had their own way pretty much, I expect," answered the Captain. "I was not often at home, you know, and there's nobody else they'd obey."

"Well, Godfrey, if I am to remain here, you will have to help me manage them."

"That's as may be, Emma. When I deem it necessary to speak, I speak; otherwise I don't interfere. And you must not get into the habit of appealing to me, recollect."

Captain Monk's conversation was sometimes interspersed with sundry light words, not at all orthodox, and not necessarily delivered in anger. In those past days swearing was regarded as a gentleman's accomplishment; a sailor, it was believed, could not at all get along without it. Manners change. The present age prides itself upon its politeness: but what of its sincerity?

Mrs. Carradyne, mild and gentle, commenced her task of striving to tame her brother's rebellious children. She might as well have let it alone. The girls laughed at her one minute and set her at defiance the next. Hubert, who had good feeling, was more obedient; he did not openly defy her. At times, when her task pressed heavily upon her spirits, Mrs. Carradyne felt tempted to run away from Leet Hall, as Godfrey had run from it in the days gone by. Her own two children were frightened at their cousins, and she speedily sent both to school, lest they should catch their bad manners. Henry was ten, the age of Hubert; Lucy was between five and six.

Just before the death of Raymond Monk, the living of Church Leet became vacant, and the last act of his life was to present it to a worthy young clergyman named George West. This caused intense dissatisfaction to Godfrey. He had heard of the late incumbent's death, and when he arrived home and found the living filled up he proclaimed his anger loudly, lavishing abuse upon poor dead Raymond for his precipitancy. He had wanted to bestow it upon a friend of his, a Colonial chaplain, and had promised it to him. It was a checkmate there was no help for now, for Mr. West could not be turned out again; but Captain Monk was not accustomed to be checkmated, and resented it accordingly. He took up, for no other reason, a most inveterate dislike to George West, and showed it practically.

In every step the Vicar took, at every turn and thought, he found himself opposed by Captain Monk. Had he a suggestion to make for the welfare of the parish, his patron ridiculed it; did he venture to propose some wise measure at a vestry meeting, the Captain put him and his measure down. Not civilly either, but with a stinging contempt, semi-covert though it was, that made its impression on the farmers around. The Reverend George West was a man of humility, given to much self-disparagement, so he bore all in silence and hoped for better times.

The time went on; three years of it; Captain Monk had fully settled down in his ancestral home, and the neighbours had learnt what a domineering, self-willed man he was. But he had his virtues. He was kind in a general way, generous where it pleased him to be, inordinately attached to his children, and hospitable to a fault.

On the last day of every year, as the years came round, Captain

Monk, following his late father's custom, gave a grand dinner to his tenants; and a very good custom it would have been, but that he and they got rather too jolly. The parson was always invited—and went; and sometimes a few of Captain Monk's personal friends were added.

Christmas came round this year as usual, and the invitations to the dinner went out. One came to Squire Todhetley, a youngish man then, and one to my father, William Ludlow, who was younger than the Squire. It was a green Christmas; the weather so warm and genial that the hearty farmers, flocking to Leet Hall, declared they saw signs of buds sprouting in the hedges, whilst the large fire in the Captain's dining-room was quite oppressive.

Looking from the window of the parsonage sitting-room in the twilight, while drawing on his gloves, preparatory to setting forth, stood Mr. West. His wife was bending over an easy-chair, in which their only child, little Alice, lay back, covered up. Her breathing was quick, her skin parched with fever. The wife looked sickly herself.

"Well, I suppose it is time to go," observed Mr. West, slowly. "I shall be late if I don't."

"I rather wonder you go at all, George," returned his wife. "Year after year, when you come back from this dinner, you invariably say you will not go to another."

"I know it, Mary. I dislike the drinking that goes on—and the free conversation—and the objectionable songs; I feel out of place in it all."

"And the Captain's contemptuous treatment of yourself, you might add."

"Yes, that is another unwelcome item in the evening's programme."

"Then, George, why *do* you go?"

"Well, I think you know why. I do not like to refuse the invitation; it would only increase Captain Monk's animosity and widen still further the breach between us. As patron he holds so much in his power. Besides that, my presence at the table does act, I believe, as a mild restraint on some of them, keeping the drinking and the language somewhat within bounds. Yes, I suppose my duty lies in going. But I shall not stay late, Mary," added the parson, bending to look at the suffering child; "and if you see any real necessity for the doctor to be called in to-night, I will go for him."

"Dood-bye, pa-pa," lisped the little four-year-old maiden.

He kissed the little hot face, said adieu to his wife and went out, hoping that the child would recover without the doctor; for the living of Church Leet was but a poor one, though the parsonage house was so handsome. It was a hundred-and-sixty pounds a year, for which sum the tithes had been compounded, and Mr. West had not

much money to spare for superfluities—especially as he had to substantially help his mother.

The twilight had deepened almost to night, and the lights in the mansion seemed to smile a cheerful welcome as he approached it. The pillared entrance, ascended to by broad steps, stood in the middle, and a raised terrace of stone ran along before the windows on either side. It was quite true that every year at the conclusion of these feasts, the Vicar resolved never to attend another; but he was essentially a man of peace, striving ever to lay oil upon troubled waters, after the example left by his Master.

Dinner. The board was full. Captain Monk presided, genial to-day; genial even to the parson. Squire Todhetley faced the Captain at the foot; Mr. West sat at the Squire's right hand, between him and Farmer Threpp, a quiet man and supposed to be a very substantial one. All went on pleasantly; but when the elaborate dinner gave place to dessert and wine-drinking, the company became rather noisy.

"I think it's about time you left us," cried the Squire by-and-by to young Hubert, who sat next him on the other side: and over and over again Mr. Todhetley has repeated to us in later years the very words that passed.

"By George, yes!" put in a bluff and hearty fox-hunter, the master of the hounds, bending forward to look at the lad, for he was in a line with him, and breaking short off an anecdote he was regaling the company with. "I forgot you were there, Master Hubert. Quite time you went to bed."

"I daresay!" laughed the boy. "Please let me alone, all of you. I don't want attention drawn to me."

But the slight commotion had attracted Captain Monk's notice. He saw his son.

"What's that?—Hubert! What brings you there now, you young pirate? I ordered you to go out with the cloth."

"I am not doing any harm, papa," said the boy, turning his fair and beautiful face towards his father.

Captain Monk pointed his stern finger at the door; a mandate which Hubert dared not disobey, and he went out.

The company sat on, an interminable period of time it seemed to the Vicar. He glanced stealthily at his watch. Eleven o'clock.

"Thinking of going, Parson?" said Mr. Threpp. "I'll go with you. My head's not one of the strongest, and I've had about as much as I ought to carry."

They rose quietly, not to disturb the table; intending to steal away, if possible, without being observed. Unluckily, Captain Monk chanced to be looking that way.

"Halloa! who's turning sneak?—Not you, surely, Parson!—" in a meaningly contemptuous tone. "And *you*, Threpp, of all men! Sit down again, both of you, if you don't want to quarrel with me.

Odds fish! has my dining-room got sharks in it, that you'd run away? Winter, just lock the door, will you; you are close to it; and pass up the key to me."

Mr. Winter, a jovial old man and the largest tenant on the estate, rose to do the Captain's behest, and sent up the key.

"Nobody quits my room," said the host, as he took it, "until we have seen the old year out and the new one in. What else do you come for—eh, gentlemen?"

The revelry went on. The decanters circulated more quickly, the glasses clicked, the songs became louder, the Captain's sea stories broader. Mr. West perforce made the best of the situation, certain words of Holy Writ running through his memory:

"*Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright!*"

Well, more than well, for Captain Monk, that he had not looked upon the red wine that night!

In the midst of all this, the hall clock began to strike twelve. The Captain rose, after filling his glass to the brim.

"Bumpers round, gentlemen. On your legs. Ready? Hooray! Here's to the shade of the year that's gone, and may it have buried all our cares with it! And here's good luck to the one setting-in. A happy New Year to you all; and may we never know a moment in it worse than the present! Three-times-three—and drain your glasses."

"But we have had the toast too soon!" called out one of the farmers, making the discovery close after the cheers had subsided. "It wants some minutes yet to midnight, Captain."

Captain Monk snatched out his watch—worn in those days in what was called the fob-pocket—its chain and bunch of seals at the end hanging down.

"By Jupiter!" he exclaimed. "Hang that butler of mine! He knew the hall clock was too fast, and I told him to put it back. If his memory serves him no better than this, he may ship himself off to a fresh berth.—Hark! Listen!"

It was the church clock striking twelve. The sound reached the dining-room very clearly, the wind setting that way. "Another bumper," cried the Captain, and his guests drank it.

"This day twelvemonth I was at a feast in Derbyshire; the bells of a neighbouring church rang-in the year with pleasant melody; chimes they were," remarked a guest, who was a partial stranger. "Your church has no bells, I suppose?"

"It has one; an old ting-tang that calls us to service on a Sunday," said Mr. Winter.

"I like to hear those midnight chimes, for my part. I like to hear them chime-in the new year," went on the stranger.

"Chimes!" cried out Captain Monk, who was getting very considerably elated, "why should we not have chimes? Mr. West, why don't we have chimes?"

"Our church does not possess any, sir—as this gentleman has just remarked," was Mr. West's answer.

"Egad, but that parson of ours is going to set us all ablaze with his wit!" jerked out the Captain ironically. "I asked, sir, why we should not get a set of chimes; I did not say we had got them. Is there any just cause or impediment why we should not, Mr. Vicar?"

"Only the expense," replied the Vicar, in a conciliatory tone.

"Oh, bother expense! That's what you are always wanting to groan over. Mr. Churchwarden Threpp, we will call a vestry meeting and make a rate."

"The parish could not bear it, Captain Monk," remonstrated the clergyman. "You know what dissatisfaction was caused by the last extra rate put on, and how low an ebb things are at just now."

"When I will a thing, I do it," retorted the Captain, with a meaning word or two. "We'll send out the rate and we'll get the chimes."

"It will, I fear, lie in my duty to protest against it," spoke the uneasy parson.

"It may lie in your duty to be a wet-blanket, but you won't protest me out of my will. Gentlemen, we will all meet here again this time twelvemonth, when the chimes shall ring-in the new year for you.—— Here, Dutton, you can unlock the door now," concluded the Captain, handing the key to the other churchwarden. "Our parson is upon thorns to be away from us."

Not the parson only, but several others availed themselves of the opportunity to escape.

II.

It perhaps did not surprise the parish to find that its owner and master, Captain Monk, intended to persist in his resolution of embellishing the church-tower with a set of chiming-bells. They knew him too well to hope anything less. Why! two years ago, at the same annual feast, some remarks or other at table put it into his head to declare he would stop up the public path by the Rill; and his obstinate will carried it out, regardless of the inconvenience it caused.

A vestry meeting was called, and the rate (to obtain funds for the bells) was at length passed. Two or three voices were feebly lifted in opposition; Mr. West alone had courage to speak out; but the Captain put him down with his strong hand. It may be asked why Captain Monk did not provide the funds himself for this whim. But he would never touch his own pocket for the benefit of the parish if he could help it: and it was thought that his antagonism to the parson was the deterring motive.

To impose the rate was one thing, to collect it quite another. Some of the poorer ratepayers protested with tears in their eyes that they could not pay. Superfluous rates (really not necessary ones) were perpetually being inflicted upon them, they urged, and were bringing

them, together with a succession of recent bad seasons, to the verge of ruin. They carried their remonstrances to their Vicar, and he in turn carried them to Captain Monk.

It only widened the breach. The more persistently, though gently, Mr. West pleaded the cause of his parishioners, asking the Captain to be considerate to them for humanity's sake, the greater grew the other's obstinacy in holding to his own will. To be thus opposed roused all the devil within him—it was his own expression ; and he grew to hate Mr. West with an exceeding bitter hatred.

The chimes were ordered—to play one tune only. Mr. West asked, when the thing was absolutely inevitable, that at least some sweet and sacred melody, acceptable to church-going ears, might be chosen ; but Captain Monk fixed on a sea-song that was a favourite of his own—"The Bay of Biscay." At the end of every hour, when the clock had struck, the Bay of Biscay was to burst forth to charm the parish.

The work was put in hand at once, Captain Monk finding the necessary funds, to be repaid by the proceeds of the rate. Other expenses were involved, such as the strengthening of the belfry. The rate was not collected quickly. It was, I say, one of those times of scarcity that people used to talk so much of years ago ; and when the parish beadle, who was the parish collector, went round with the tax-paper in his hand, the poorer of the cottagers could not respond to it. Some of them had not paid the last levy, and Captain Monk threatened harsh measures. Altogether, what with one thing or another, Church Leet that year was kept in a state of ferment. But the work went on.

One windy day in September, Mr. West sat in his study writing a sermon, when a jarring crash rang out from the church close by. He leaped from his chair. The unusual noise had startled him ; and it struck on every chord of vexation he possessed. He knew that workmen were busy in the tower, but this was the first essay of the chimes. The bells had clashed in some way one upon the other ; not giving out The Bay of Biscay or any other melody, but a very discordant jangle indeed. It was the first and the last time that poor George West heard their sound.

He put the blotting-paper upon his sermon ; he was in no mind to continue it then ; took up his hat and went out. His wife spoke to him from the open window.

"Are you going out now, George? Tea is all but ready."

Turning back on the path, he passed into the sitting-room. A cup of tea might soothe his nerves. The tea-tray stood on the table, and Mrs. West, caddy in hand, was putting the tea into the tea-pot. Little Alice sat gravely by.

"Did you hear dat noise up in the church, papa?" she asked.

"Yes, I heard it, dear," sighed the Vicar.

"A fine clashing it was!" cried Mrs. West. "I have heard something else this afternoon, George, worse than that: Bean's furniture is being taken away."

"What?" cried the Vicar.

"It's true. Sarah went out on an errand and passed the cottage. The chairs and tables were being put outside the door by two men, she says: brokers, I conclude."

Mr. West made short work of his tea and started for the scene. Thomas Bean was a very small farmer indeed, renting about thirty acres. What with the heavy rates, as he said, and other outgoings and bad seasons, and ill-luck altogether, he had been behind in his payments this long while; and now the ill-luck seemed to have come to a climax. Bean and his wife were old; their children were scattered abroad.

"Oh, sir," cried the old lady when she saw the Vicar, the tears raining from her eyes, "it cannot be right that this oppression should fall upon us! We had just managed—Heaven knows how, for I'm sure I don't—to pay the Midsummer rent; and now they've come upon us for the rates, and have took away things worth ten times the sum."

"For the rates!" mechanically spoke the Vicar.

She supposed it was a question. "Yes, sir; two of 'em we had in the house. One was for putting up the chimes; and the other —well, I can't just remember what the other was. The beadle, old Crow, comes in, sir, this afternoon. 'Where be the master?' says he. 'Gone over to t'other side of Church Dykely,' says I. 'Well,' says he, upon that, 'you be going to have some visitors presently, and it's a pity he's out.' 'Visitors, for what, Crow?' says I. 'Oh, you'll see,' says he; 'and then perhaps you'll wish you'd bestirred yourselves to pay your just dues. Captain Monk's patience have been running on for a goodish while, and at last it have run clean out.' Well, sir ——"

She had to make a pause; unable to control her grief.

"Well, sir," she went on presently, "Crow's back was hardly turned, when up came two men, wheeling a truck. I saw 'em afar off, by the ricks yonder. One came in; t'other stayed outside with the truck. He asked me whether I was ready with the money for the taxes; and I told him I was not ready, and had but a couple of shillings in the house. 'Then I must take the value of it in kind,' says he. And without another word, he beckons in the outside man to help him. Our middle table, a mahogany, they seized; and the handsome oak chest, which had been our pride; and the master's arm-chair—— But, there! I can't go on."

Mr. West felt nearly as sorrowful as she, and far more angry. In his heart he believed that Captain Monk had done this oppressive thing in revenge. A great deal of ill-feeling had existed in the parish touching the rate made for the chimes; and the Captain assumed

that the few who had not yet paid it *would* not pay—not that they could not.

Quitting the cottage in an impulse of anger, he walked swiftly to Leet Hall. It lay in his duty, as he fully deemed, to avow fearlessly to Captain Monk what he thought of this act of oppression, and to protest against it. The beams of the setting sun, sinking below the horizon in the still autumn evening, fell across the stubbled fields from which the corn had not long been reaped; all around seemed to speak of peace.

To accommodate two gentlemen who had come from Worcester that day to Leet Hall on business, and wished to quit it again before dark, the dinner had been served earlier than usual. The guests had left, but Captain Monk was seated still over his wine in the dining-room when Mr. West was shown in. In crossing the hall to it, he met Mrs. Carradyne, who shook hands with him cordially.

Captain Monk looked surprised. "Why, this is an unexpected pleasure—a visit from you, Mr. Vicar," he cried, in mocking jest. "Hope you have come to your senses! Sit down. Will you take port or sherry?"

"Captain Monk," returned the Vicar, gravely, as he took the chair the servant had placed, "I am obliged for your courtesy, but I did not intrude upon you this evening to drink wine. I have seen a very sad sight, and I am come hoping to induce you to repair it."

"Seen what?" cried the Captain, who, it is well to mention, had been taking his wine very freely, even for him. "A flaming sword in the sky?"

"Your tenants, poor Thomas Bean and his wife, are being turned out of house and home, or almost equivalent to it. Some of their furniture has been seized this afternoon to satisfy the demand for these disputed taxes."

"Who disputes the taxes?"

"The tax imposed for the chimes was always a disputed tax; and ——"

"Tush!" interrupted the Captain; "Bean owes other things as well as taxes."

"It was the last feather, sir, which broke the camel's back."

"The last feather will not be taken off, whether it breaks backs or leaves them whole," retorted the Captain, draining his glass of port and filling it again. "Take you note of that, Mr. Parson."

"Others are in the same condition as the Beans—quite unable to pay these rates. I pray you, Captain Monk—I am here to *pray* you—not to proceed in the same manner against them. I would also pray you, sir, to redeem this act of oppression by causing their goods to be returned to these two poor, honest, hard-working people."

"Hold your tongue!" retorted the Captain, aroused to anger. "A pretty example *you'd* set, let you have your way. Every one of

the lot shall be made to pay to the last farthing. Who the devil is to pay, do you suppose, if they don't?"

"Rates are imposed upon the parish needlessly, Captain Monk; it has been so ever since my time here. Pardon me for saying that if you put up chimes to gratify yourself, you should bear the expense, and not throw it upon those who have a struggle to get bread to eat."

Captain Monk drank off another glass. "Any more treason, Parson?"

"Yes," said Mr. West, "if you like to call it so. My conscience tells me that the whole procedure in regard to setting up these chimes is so wrong, so manifestly unjust, that I have determined not to allow them to be heard until the rates levied for them are refunded to the poor and oppressed. I believe I have the power to close the belfry-tower, and I shall act upon it."

"By Jove! do you think *you* are going to stand between me and my will?" cried the Captain passionately. "Every individual who has not yet paid the rate shall be made to pay it to-morrow."

"There is another world, Captain Monk," interposed the mild voice of the minister, "to which, I hope, we are all ——"

"If you attempt to preach to me——"

At this moment a spoon fell to the ground by the sideboard. The Vicar turned to look; his back was towards it; the Captain peered also at the end of the rapidly-darkening room: when both became aware that one of the servants—Michael, who had shown in Mr. West—stood there; had stood there all the time.

"What are you waiting for, sirrah?" roared his master. "We don't want *you*. Here! put this window open an inch or two before you go; the room's close."

"Shall I bring lights, sir?" asked Michael, after doing as he was directed.

"No: who wants lights? Stir the fire into a blaze."

Michael left them. It was from him that thus much of the conversation was subsequently known.

Not five minutes had elapsed when a commotion was heard in the dining-room. Then the bell rang violently, and the Captain opened the door—overturning a chair in his passage to it—and shouted out for a light. More than one servant flew to obey the order: in his hasty moods their master brooked not delay: and three separate candles were carried in.

"Good lack, master!" exclaimed the butler, John Rimmer, who was a native of Church Dykely, "what's amiss with the Parson?"

"Lift him up, and loosen his neck-cloth," said Captain Monk, his tone less imperious than usual.

Mr. West lay on the hearthrug near his chair, his head resting close to the fender. Rimmer raised his head, another servant took off his black neck-tie; for it was only on high days that the poor

Vicar indulged in a white one. He gasped twice, struggled slightly, and then lay quietly in the butler's arms.

"Oh, sir!" burst forth the man in a horror-stricken voice to his master, "this is surely death!"

It surely was. George West, who had gone there but just before in the height of health and strength, had breathed his last.

How did it happen? How could it have happened? Ay, how indeed? It was a question which has never been entirely solved in Church Leet to this day.

Captain Monk's account, both privately and at the inquest, was this: As they talked further together, after Michael left the room, the Vicar went on to browbeat him shamefully about the new chimes, vowing they should never play, never be heard; at last, rising in an access of passion, the Parson struck him (the Captain) in the face. He returned the blow—who wouldn't return it?—and the Vicar fell. He believed his head must have struck against the iron fender in falling: if not, if the blow had been an unlucky one (it took effect just behind the left ear), it was only given in self-defence. The jury, composed of Captain Monk's tenants, expressed themselves satisfied, and returned a verdict of Accidental Death.

"A false account," pronounced poor Mrs. West, in her dire tribulation. "My husband never struck him—never; he was not one to be goaded into unbecoming anger, even by Captain Monk. *George struck no blow whatever;* I can answer for it. If ever a man was murdered, he has been."

Curious rumours arose. It was said that Mrs. Carradyne, taking the air on the terrace outside in the calmness of the autumn evening, heard the fatal quarrel through the open window; that she heard Mr. West, after he had received the death blow, wail forth a prophecy (or whatever it might be called) that those chimes would surely be accursed; that whenever their sound should be heard, so long as they were suffered to remain in the tower, it should be the signal of woe to the Monk family.

Mrs. Carradyne utterly denied this; she had not been on the terrace at all, she said. Upon which the onus was shifted to Michael: who, it was suspected, had stolen out to listen to the end of the quarrel, and had heard the ominous words. Michael, in his turn, also denied it; but he was not believed. Anyway, the covert whisper had gone abroad and would not be laid.

III.

Captain Monk speedily filled up the vacant living, appointing to it the Reverend Thomas Dancox, an occasional visitor at Leet Hall, who was looking out for one.

The new Vicar turned out to be a man after the Captain's heart, a rollicking, jovial, fox-hunting young parson, as many a parson was

in those days—and took small blame to himself for it. He was only a year or two past thirty, good-looking, of taking manners and hail-fellow-well-met with the parish in general, who liked him and called him to his face Tom Dancox.

All this pleased Captain Monk. But very soon something was to arrive that did not please him—a suspicion that the young parson and his daughter Katherine were on rather too good terms with one another.

One day in November he stalked into the drawing-room, where Katherine was sitting with her aunt. Hubert and Eliza were away at school, also Mrs. Carradyne's two children.

"Was Dancox here last night?" began Captain Monk.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Carradyne.

"And the evening before—Monday?"

Mrs. Carradyne felt half afraid to answer, the Captain's tone was becoming so threatening. "I—I think so," she rather hesitatingly said. "Was he not, Katherine?"

Katherine Monk, a dark, haughty young woman, twenty-one now, turned round with a flush on her handsome face. "Why do you ask, papa?"

"I ask to be answered," replied he, standing with his hands in the pockets of his velveteen shooting coat, a purple tinge of incipient anger rising in his cheeks.

"Then Mr. Dancox did spend Monday evening here."

"And I saw him walking with you in the meadow by the rill this morning," continued the Captain. "Look here, Katherine, *no sweet-hearting with Tom Dancox.* He may do very well for a parson; I like him as such, as such only, you understand; but he can be no match for you."

"You are disturbing yourself unnecessarily, sir," said Katherine, her own tone an angry one.

"Well, I hope that is so; I should not like to think otherwise. Anyway, a word in season does no harm; and, take you notice that I have spoken it. You also, Emma."

As he left the room, Mrs. Carradyne spoke, dropping her voice: "Katherine, you know that I had already warned you. I told you it would not do to fall into any particular friendship with Mr. Dancox; that your father would never countenance it."

"And if I were to?—and if he did not?" scornfully returned Katherine. "What then, Aunt Emma?"

"Be silent, child; you must not talk in that strain. Your papa is perfectly right in this matter. Tom Dancox is not suitable in any way—for *you*."

This took place in November. Katherine paid little heed to the advice; she was not one to put up with advice of any sort, and she and Mr. Dancox met occasionally under the rose. Early in December she went with Mr. Dancox into the Parsonage, while he

searched for a book he was about to lend her. That was the plea; the truth, no doubt, being that the two wanted a bit of a chat in quiet. As ill-luck had it, when she was coming out again, the Parson in attendance on her as far as the gate, Captain Monk came by.

A scene ensued. Captain Monk, in a terrible access of passion, vowed by all the laws of the Medes and Persians, which alter not, that never, in life or after death, should those two rebellious ones be man and wife, and he invoked unheard-of penalties on their heads should they dare to contemplate disobedience to his decree.

Thenceforth there was no more open rebellion; upon the surface all looked smooth. Captain Monk understood the folly to be at an end: that the two had come to their senses; and he took Tom Dancox back into favour. Mrs. Carradyne assumed the same. But Katherine had her father's unyielding will, and the Parson was bold and careless, and in love.

The last day of the year came round, and the usual banquet would come with it. The weather this Christmas was not like that of last; the white snow lay on the ground, the cold biting frost hardened the glistening icicles on the trees.

And the chimes? Ready these three months past, they had not yet been heard. They would be to-night. Whether Captain Monk wished the remembrance of Mr. West's death to die away a bit first, or that he preferred to open the treat on the banqueting night, certain it was that he had kept them silent. When the church clock should toll the midnight knell of the old year, the chimes would ring out to welcome the new one and gladden the ears of Church Leet.

But not without a remonstrance. That morning, as the Captain sat in his study writing a letter, Mrs. Carradyne came to him.

"Godfrey," she said in a low and pleading tone, "you will not suffer the chimes to play to-night, will you? Pray do not."

"Not suffer the chimes to play?" cried the Captain. "But indeed I shall. Why, this is the special night they were put up for."

"I know it, Godfrey. But—you cannot think what a strangely-strong feeling I have against it: an instinct, it seems to me. The chimes have brought nothing but discomfort and disaster yet; they may bring more in the future."

Captain Monk stared at her. "What d'ye mean, Emma?"

"*I would never let them be heard*," she said impressively. "I would have them taken down again. The story went about, you know, that poor George West in dying prophesied that whenever they should be heard woe would fall upon this house. I am not superstitious, Godfrey, but——"

Sheer passion had tied, so far, Godfrey Monk's lips. "Not superstitious!" he raved out. "You are worse than that, Emma—a fool. How dare you bring your nonsense here? There's the door."

The banquet hour approached. Nearly all the guests of last

year were again present in the warm and holly-decorated dining-room, the one notable exception being the ill-fated Parson West. Parson Dancox came in his stead, and said grace from the post of honour at the Captain's right hand. Captain Monk did not appear to feel any remorse or regret: he was jovial, free, and grandly hospitable; one might suppose he had promoted the dead clergyman to a canonry instead of to a place in the churchyard.

"What became of the poor man's widow, Squire?" whispered a gentleman from the neighbourhood of Evesham to Mr. Todhetley, who sat on the left-hand of his host; Sir Thomas Rivers taking the foot of the table this year.

"Mrs. West? Well, we heard she opened a girls' school up in London," breathed the Squire.

"And what tale was that about his leaving a curse on the chimes?—I never heard the rights of it."

"Hush!" said the Squire cautiously. "Nobody talks of that here. Or believes it, either. Poor West was a man to leave a blessing behind him; never a curse."

Hubert, at home for the holidays, was again at table. He was fourteen now, tall of his age and slender, his blue eyes bright, his complexion delicately beautiful. The pleated cambric frill of his shirt, which hung over the collar of his Eton jacket after the fashion of the day, was carried low in front, displaying the small white throat; his golden hair curled naturally. A boy to admire and be proud of. The manners were more decorous this year than they ever had been, and Hubert was allowed to sit on. Possibly the shadow of George West's unhappy death lay insensibly upon the party.

It was about half-past nine o'clock when the butler came into the room, bringing a small note, twisted up, to his master from Mrs. Carradyne. Captain Monk opened it and held it towards one of the lighted branches to read the few words it contained.

"*A gentleman is asking to speak a word to Mr. Dancox. He says it is important.*"

Captain Monk tore the paper to bits. "*Not to-night*, tell your mistress, is my answer," said he to Rimmer. "Hubert, you can go to your aunt now; it's past your bed-time."

There could be no appeal, as the boy knew; but he went off unwillingly and in bitter resentment against Mrs. Carradyne. He supposed she had sent for him.

"What a cross old thing you are, Aunt Emma!" he exclaimed as he entered the drawing-room on the other side the hall. "You won't let Harry go in at all to the banquets, and you won't let me stay at them! Papa meant—I think he meant—to let me remain there to hear the chimes. Why need you have interfered to send for me?"

"I neither interfered with you, Hubert, nor sent for you. A

gentleman, who did not give his name and preferred to wait outside, wants to see Mr. Dancox; that's all," said Mrs. Carradyne. "You gave my note to your master, Rimmer?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied the butler. "My master bade me say to you that his answer was *not to-night.*"

Katherine Monk, her face betraying some agitation, rose from the piano. "Was the message not given to Mr. Dancox?" she asked of Rimmer.

"Not while I was there, Miss Katherine. The master tore the note into bits, after reading it; and dropped them under the table."

Now it chanced that Mr. Dancox, glancing covertly at the note while the Captain held it to the light, had read what was written there. For a few minutes he said nothing. The Captain was busy sending round the wine.

"Captain Monk—pardon me—I saw my name on that bit of paper; it caught my eye as you held it out," he said in a low tone. "Am I called out? Is anyone in the parish dying?"

Thus questioned, Captain Monk told the truth. No one was dying, and he was not called out to the parish. Some gentleman was asking to speak to him; only that.

"Well, I'll just see who it is, and what he wants," said Mr. Dancox, rising. "Won't be away two minutes, sir."

"Bring him back with you; tell him he'll find good wine here and jolly cheer," said the Captain. And Mr. Dancox went out, swinging his table-napkin in his hand.

In crossing the hall he met Katherine, exchanged a hasty word with her, let fall the serviette on a chair as he caught up his hat and overcoat, and went out. Katherine ran upstairs.

Hubert lay down on one of the drawing-room sofas. In point of fact, that young gentleman could not walk straight. A little wine takes effect on youngsters, especially when they are not accustomed to it. Mrs. Carradyne told Hubert the best place for him was bed. Not a bit of it, the boy answered: he should go out on the terrace at twelve o'clock; the chimes would be fine, heard out there. He fell asleep almost as he spoke; presently he woke up, feeling headachy, cross and stupid, and of his own accord went up to bed.

Meanwhile, the dining-room was getting jollier and louder as the time passed on towards midnight. Great wonder was expressed at the non-return of the parson; somebody must be undoubtedly grievously sick or dying. Mr. Speck, the quiet little Hurst Leet doctor, dissented from this. Nobody was dying in the parish, he affirmed, or sick enough to need a priest; as a proof of it, *he* had not been sent for.

Ring, ring, ring! broke forth the chimes on the quiet midnight air, as the church clock finished striking twelve. It was a sweet sound; even those prejudiced against the chimes could hear that: the windows had been opened in readiness.

The glasses were charged; the company stood on their legs, some of them not at all steady legs just then, bending their ears to listen. Captain Monk stood in his place, majestically waving his head and his left hand to keep time in harmony with the Bay of Biscay. His right hand held his goblet in readiness for the toast when the sounds should cease.

Ring, ring, ring! chimed the last strokes of the bells, dying away to faintness on the still evening air. Suddenly, amidst the hushed silence, and whilst the sweet melody fell yet unbroken on the room, there arose a noise as of something falling outside on the terrace, mingled with a wild scream and the crash of breaking glass.

One of the guests rushed to the window, and put his head out of it. So far as he could see, he said (perhaps his sight was somewhat obscured), it was a looking-glass lying further up on the terrace.

Thrown out from one of the upper windows! scornfully pronounced the Captain, full of wrath that it should have happened at that critical moment to mar the dignity of his coming toast. And he gave the toast heartily; and the new year came in for them all with good wishes and good wine.

Some little time yet ere the company finally rose. The mahogany frame of the broken looking-glass, standing on end, was conspicuous on the white ground in the clear frosty night, as they streamed out from the house. Mr. Speck, whose sight was rather remarkably good, peered at it curiously from the hall steps, and then walked quickly along the snowy terrace towards it.

Sure enough, it was a looking-glass, broken in its fall from an open window above. But, lying by it in the deep snow, in his white night-shirt, was Hubert Monk.

When the chimes began to play, Hubert was not asleep. Sitting up in bed, he disposed himself to listen. After a bit they began to grow fainter; Hubert impatiently dashed to the window and threw it up to its full height as he jumped on the dressing-table, when in some unfortunate way he overbalanced himself, and pitched out on the terrace beneath, carrying the looking-glass with him. The fall was not much, for his room was in one of the wings, the windows of which were low; but the boy had struck his head in falling, and there he had lain, insensible, on the terrace, one hand still clasping the looking-glass.

All the rosy wine-tint fading away to a sickly paleness on the Captain's face, he looked down on his well-beloved son. The boy was carried indoors to his room, reviving with the movement.

"Young bones are elastic," pronounced Mr. Speck, when he had examined him; "and none of these are broken. He will probably have a cold from the exposure; that's about the worst."

He seemed to have it already: he was shivering from head to foot now, as he related the above particulars. All the family had assembled round him, except Katherine.

"Where is Katherine?" suddenly inquired her father, noticing her absence.

"I cannot think where she is," said Mrs. Carradyne. "I have not seen her for an hour or two. Eliza says she is not in her room; I sent her to see. She is somewhere about, of course."

"Go and look for your sister, Eliza. Tell her to come here," said Captain Monk. But though Eliza went at once, her quest was useless.

Miss Katherine was not in the house: Miss Katherine had made a moonlight flitting from it that evening with the Reverend Thomas Dancox.

You will hear more in the next paper.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

A SONG.

BLUE eyes that laugh at early morn
May weep ere close of day;
And weeping is a thing of scorn
To those whose hearts are gay.
Ah, simple souls, beware, beware!
Time's finger changeth smile to care!

Gold locks that glitter as the sun
May sudden fade to grey;
And who shall favour anyone
Despoiled of bright array?
Ah, simple souls, beware of loss,
Time's finger changeth gold to dross!

Good lack! we talk, yet all the same
We throw our words away!
The smiles, the gold, the tears, the shame,
Each tries them in his day.
And Time, with vengeful finger, makes
Of fondest goods our chief mistakes!

G. B. STUART.

MISS KATE MARSDEN.

IN this practical age we are inclined to estimate people by the worth of what they do, and thus it happens that Miss Kate Marsden and her mission are creating an interest and genuine admiration in the hearts of the people such as few individuals or circumstances have power to call forth.

The work she has set herself to do, regardless of the dangers and difficulties she will have to encounter, seems to us, who look out from the security of our homes in this favoured land, almost beyond human power to perform. It is, in fact, appalling.

Even Miss Nightingale, who never exaggerates, writes of this lady: "Surely no human being ever needed the loving Father's help and guidance more than this brave woman." And in this the readers of THE ARGOSY will fully agree.

Her purpose is to travel through Russia to the extreme points of Siberia, chiefly for the purpose of seeing the condition of those affected with incurable disease, and what can be done to improve their surroundings and mitigate their sufferings.

This, if it stood alone, would be a grand work; but it is by no means all she hopes to do.

It is her purpose to join the gangs of exiles on their way to Siberia, to note their treatment, to halt at their halting-stages, and see if it be true that there is an utter absence of all sanitary appliances; that filth and cruelty are in evidence; and that the strongest constitutions break down under conditions unfit for brute beasts. She will investigate the assertions that delicate innocent women and children are chained to vile criminals, and so made to take their way on foot thousands of miles to far-off Siberia; often for no other crime than some careless words spoken against the Greek Church or the Czar.

She hopes fully to inspect the prisons and mines in those far-off regions, described by the Russians themselves as "living tombs." She will, if possible, go into the cells of the condemned exiles, whose walls are bare, except for their living covering of myriads of insects; and, lastly, she intends to visit the Jews' quarters, and satisfy our minds as to the existence of the terrible cruelties inflicted upon this persecuted race, the hearing of which alone is heart-breaking.

And all through her perilous journeys we may be sure she will lose no opportunity of comforting and helping the suffering ones who come under her notice, no matter what their race or condition.

This line of conduct will have its dangers; but she holds not her life dear unto her, so that she may accomplish her heart's desire. The practical result looked forward to by her is, that, having gained an intimate knowledge of the sufferings and cruelties inflicted upon so

many thousands of Russian subjects, and of which there have been such conflicting accounts, she may be admitted a second time into the presence of the Empress, there to place the actual scenes before her, and to plead the cause of the sufferers personally.

Strange to say, she is convinced in her own mind that the Emperor and Empress of Russia are ignorant of a great deal that is done in their name; or, as the phrase is, "By order of the Czar;" and that they know little of the results of those Edicts and Ukase which are causing such dire misery to thousands of their subjects, not only to the long-suffering Jews but also to Christian women and children; and it is her belief that if the truth could be placed before them, as she hopes to place it, they will attack the evil even at the cost of life or crown.

This is quite a different view from that which obtains generally; and if Miss Kate Marsden should be able to prove her point, and bring before them the pictures of what she may see on her journey to and from Siberia, she will score a result such as has fallen to no one's endeavour hitherto.

It is only now and then in a lifetime that we meet a woman capable of such a grand work as this which Miss Kate Marsden has taken upon herself; and the reason is that the qualifications necessary are so rarely found in combination in one and the same individual. Many among us may have one or other of the characteristics, but it is the existence of them all in one person that makes the heroine and gives the power.

You cannot be an hour in Miss Kate Marsden's company without becoming aware of her enthusiasm, her courage, her self-devotion, her fearlessness, and above all her simple child-like faith. It avails nothing that you place before her the trials, the horrors, the dangers, the possible failure of such an undertaking as hers. The necessity of the work to be done she considers imperative, and the certainty in her mind that it is her mission to do it carries all before it.

The bravest among us would hesitate before deciding upon a tour in Russia and Siberia, supposing it were one of pleasure or of scientific research, because even under these favourable conditions we should be subject to ignominious surveillance night and day, and the chances of leaving the country when we pleased would be very small; but what can we say of a young and delicate woman who, voluntarily and without thought of self, deliberately walks into the country where deeds are done daily which make us shrink with fear, and which, for very shame for the century in which we live, we try hard not to believe? It is as if with eyes open she walked into a den of lions and expected them to give her a loving welcome and a free egress.

Heaven help her, for she is in the midst of it and has begun her work; the result of her fearlessness remains to be seen. I doubt greatly whether we shall be allowed to receive reports of her daily life out there, even where postal regulations are in force. We can

but follow her on her way from Moscow to Tomsk in thought, and picture to ourselves the thousands of exiles she will find waiting there herded together like brute beasts. She will not turn from them, even though typhoid be raging amongst them—one can see her moving in and out among these miserable, debased human beings, who lie tossing on those terrible wooden shelves, helping them according to their needs; for she carries with her remedies for pain and disease of body, and her simple faith will find means of comforting heart and soul.

If any of those twenty thousand exiles who have this year trod the weary way between Petersburg and Tomsk, and on again to the far-off districts of Siberia, should hear of the coming of this gentle woman, strong only in her love for them, I think it would kindle a spark of hope again in their hearts. They would know that at least they were remembered by someone in the land of the living.

Miss Kate Marsden has dared so much for these poor suffering ones that she will not easily be turned aside by excessive politeness or brutality on the part of officials from seeing the actual state of things. She will not, I think, be content with viewing the Provincial Prison at Tomsk, which is light and airy and occupied by local offenders, instead of the *forwarding* prison which, according to the accounts that reach us, is a disgrace to the civilized world, and where the exiles are lodged while waiting to be "forwarded."

I pity Miss Kate Marsden if it should ever be her lot to witness the knout used to a woman without the power of stopping it, or retaliating upon the brute who is inflicting it. It would be almost the death of her.

If we have been successful in interesting the readers of THE ARGOSY in this lady and her mission, they will like to know that she is not a wilful person starting off on a wild-goose chase on a generous impulse without at all counting the cost. On the contrary, the work she is now doing has been the desire of her life, and all the training and discipline to which she has subjected herself has been for the purpose of fitting her for it.

From her earliest childhood she has been an indefatigable worker among the sick and wounded, with whom she has ever had the most intense sympathy, and consequently an extraordinary power to soothe and comfort.

Young as she was at the time of the Turko-Russian war, she did good service on the battle-fields and worked untiringly among every kind of depressing surrounding. The beautiful cross upon her breast is a gift from the Empress of Russia, as a recognition of the good work she did among the wounded soldiers at that time. From that day to this, whether in England or in New Zealand, her work has been steadily going on, ever gaining information and experience, and at the same time doing an amount of good difficult to calculate.

For one whole year she became, what I call for want of a better

name, an itinerant teacher of ambulance work, in places out of reach of doctors in New Zealand. She taught the people how to deal with accidents caused by the falling of trees, cuts with the axe, or kicks from vicious horses, all of which are of frequent occurrence in the Bush. Again, she taught the miners how to make use of surrounding materials in case of an injury: how to bandage, and how to make a stretcher for moving a wounded person from one place to another with such things as were handy, viz., with two poles and a man's coat, the poles to be placed through the arms and the coat itself to be buttoned securely over the poles. Another thing she taught in these out-of-the-way places was how to deal with burns and foreign matter in the eye or ear—also accidents of frequent occurrence.

Many interesting and exciting scenes could be related of this part of her life, but I hesitate to do more than show her training and fitness for the work she is now doing.

It is a work we all want done, and would gladly take part in had we the qualifications for it. It is a work which, if well and honestly done, will deserve the best thanks of England and of the whole civilized world. She may not live to tell us, but her life will not have been lived in vain if she prove successful in getting at the truth of what is done *By order of the Czar*, and presenting it to the Czar himself.

We cannot travel with her bodily; we cannot hunger or perish with cold in her company; we cannot fight with dogs and wolves as she must do; we cannot, with her, go into the dens of immorality and fever; but we can determine upon some way of helping her, and I think we shall only be too thankful to join her friends who by giving of their means are participating in so grand a mission.

THE FATE OF THE HARA DIAMOND.

A Story Re-told.

CHAPTER I.

MY ARRIVAL AT DEEPLEY WALLS.

"MISS Janet Hope,
To the care of Lady Chillington,
Deepley Walls, near Eastbury,
Midlandshire."

"There, miss, I'm sure that will do famously," said Chirper, the overworked, oldish young person whose duty it was to attend to the innumerable wants of the young lady boarders of Park Hill Seminary. She had just written out, in a large sprawling hand, a card as above which card was presently to be nailed on to the one small box that held the whole of my worldly belongings.

"And I think, miss," added Chirper, meditatively, as she held out the card at arm's length, and gazed at it admiringly, "that if I was to write out another card similar, and tie it round your arm, it would, mayhap, help you in getting safe to your journey's end."

I, a girl of twelve, was the Janet Hope indicated above, and I had been looking over Chirper's shoulder with wondering eyes while she addressed the card.

"But who is Lady Chillington, and where is Deepley Walls, and what have I to do with either, Chirper, please?" I asked.

"If there is one thing in little girls more hateful than another, it is curiosity," answered Chirper, with her mouth half-full of nails. "Curiosity has been the bane of many of our sex. Witness Blue-beard's unhappy wife. If you want to know more, you must ask Mrs. Whitehead. I have my instructions and I act on them."

Meeting Mrs. Whitehead half-an-hour later, as she was coming down the stone corridor that led from the refectory, I did ask that lady precisely the same questions that I had put to Chirper. Her frosty glance, filled with a cold surprise, smote me even through her spectacles; and I shrank a little, abashed at my own boldness.

"The habit of asking questions elsewhere than in the class-room should not be encouraged in young ladies," said Mrs. Whitehead, with a sort of prim severity. "The other young ladies are gone home; you are about to follow their example."

"But, Mrs. Whitehead—madam," I pleaded, "I never had any other home than Park Hill."

"More questioning, Miss Hope? Fie! Fie!"

And with a lean finger uplifted in menacing reproval, Mrs. Whitehead sailed on her way, nor deigned me another word.

I stole out into the playground, wondering, wretched, and yet smitten through with faint delicious thrillings of a new-found happiness such as I had often dreamed of, but had scarcely dared hope ever to realise. I, Janet Hope, going home! It was almost too incredible for belief. I wandered about like one mazed—like one who, stepping suddenly out of darkness into sunshine, is dazzled by an intolerable brightness whichever way he turns his eyes. And yet I was wretched: for was not Miss Chinfeather dead? And that, too, was a fact almost too incredible for belief.

As I wandered, this autumn morning, up and down the solitary playground, I went back in memory as far as memory would carry me, but only to find that Miss Chinfeather and Park Hill Seminary blocked up the way. Beyond them lay darkness and mystery. Any events in my child's life that might have happened before my arrival at Park Hill had for me no authentic existence. I had been part and parcel of Miss Chinfeather and the Seminary for so long a time that I could not dissociate myself from them even in thought. Other pupils had had holidays, and letters, and presents, and dear ones at home of whom they often talked; but for me there had been none of these things. I knew that I had been placed at Park Hill when a very little girl by some, to me, mysterious and unknown person, but further than that I knew nothing. The mistress of Park Hill had not treated me in any way differently from her other pupils; but had not the bills contracted on my account been punctually paid by somebody, I am afraid that the even-handed justice on which she prided herself—which, in conjunction with her aquiline nose and a certain antique severity of deportment, caused her to be known amongst us girls as *The Roman Matron*—would have been somewhat ruffled, and that sentence of expulsion from those classic walls would have been promptly pronounced and as promptly carried into effect.

Happily no such necessity had ever arisen; and now the Roman Matron lay dead in the little corner room on the second floor, and had done with pupils, and half yearly accounts, and antique deportment for ever.

In losing Miss Chinfeather I felt as though the corner stone of my life had been rent away. She was too cold, she was altogether too far removed for me to regard her with love, or even with that modified feeling which we call affection. But then no such demonstration was looked for by Miss Chinfeather. It was a weakness above which she rose superior. But if my child's love was a gift which she would have despised, she looked for and claimed my obedience—the resignation of my will to hers, the absorption of my individuality in her own, the gradual elimination from my life of all its colour and freshness. She strove earnestly, and with infinite patience, to change me from a dreamy, passionate child—a child full

of strange wild moods, capricious, and yet easily touched either to laughter or tears—into a prim and elegant young lady, colourless and formal, and of the most orthodox boarding-school pattern ; and if she did not quite succeed in the attempt, the fault, such as it was, must be set down to my obstinate disposition and not to any lack of effort on the part of Miss Chinfeather. And now this powerful influence had vanished from my life, from the world itself, as swiftly and silently as a snowflake in the sun. The grasp of the hard but not unkindly hand, that had held me so firmly in the narrow groove in which it wished me to move, had been suddenly relaxed, and everything around me seemed tottering to its fall. Three nights ago Miss Chinfeather had retired to rest, as well, to all appearance, and as cheerful as ever she had been ; next morning she had been found dead in bed. This was what they told us pupils ; but so great was the awe in which I held the mistress of Park Hill Seminary that I could not conceive of Death even as venturing to behave disrespectfully towards her. I pictured him in my girlish fancy as knocking at her chamber door in the middle of the night, and after apologising for the interruption, asking whether she was ready to accompany him. Then would she who was thus addressed arise, and wrap an ample robe about her, and place her hand with solemn sweetness in that of the Great Captain, and the two would pass out together into the starlit night, and Miss Chinfeather would be seen of mortal eyes nevermore.

Such was the picture that had haunted my brain for two days and as many nights, while I wandered forlorn through house and playground, or lay awake on my little bed. I had said farewell to one pupil after another till all were gone, and the riddle which I had been putting to myself continually for the last forty-eight hours had now been solved for me by Mrs. Whitehead, and I had been told that I too was going home.

"To the care of Lady Chillington, Deepley Walls, Midlandshire." The words repeated themselves again and again in my brain, and became a greater puzzle with every repetition. I had never to my knowledge heard of either the person or the place. I knew nothing of one or the other. I only knew that my heart thrilled strangely at the mention of the word *Home ;* that unbidden tears started to my eyes at the thought that perhaps—only perhaps—in that as yet unknown place there might be someone who would love me just a little. "Father—Mother." I spoke the words, but they sounded unreal to me, and as if uttered by another. I spoke them again, holding out my arms and crying aloud. All my heart seemed to go out in the cry, but only the hollow winds answered me as they piped mournfully through the yellowing leaves, a throng of which went rustling down the walk as though stirred by the footsteps of a ghost. Then my eyes grew blind with tears and I wept silently for a time as if my heart would break.

But tears were a forbidden luxury at Park Hill, and when, a little later on, I heard Chirper calling me by name, I made haste to dry my eyes and compose my features. She scanned me narrowly as I ran up to her. "You dear, soft-hearted little thing!" she said. And with that she stooped suddenly and gave me a hearty kiss, that might have been heard a dozen yards away. I was about to fling my arms round her neck, but she stopped me, saying, "That will do, dear. Mrs. Whitehead is waiting for us at the door."

Mrs. Whitehead was watching us through the glass door which led into the playground. "The coach will be here in half-an-hour, Miss Hope," she said; "so that you have not much time for your preparations."

I stood like one stunned for a moment or two. Then I said: "If you please, Mrs. Whitehead, may I see Miss Chinfeather before I go?"

Her thin, straight lips quivered slightly, but in her eyes I read only cold disapproval of my request. "Really," she said, "what a singular child you must be. I scarcely know what to say."

"Oh, if you please!" I urged. "Miss Chinfeather was always kind to me. I remember her as long as I can remember anything. To see her once more—for the last time. It would seem to me cruel to go away without."

"Follow me," she said, almost in a whisper. So I followed her softly up stairs into the little corner room where Miss Chinfeather lay in white and solemn state, grandly indifferent to all mundane matters. As I gazed, it seemed but an hour ago since I had heard those still lips conjugating the verb mourir for the behoof of poor ignorant me, and the words came back to me, and I could not help repeating them to myself as I looked: Je meurs, tu meurs, etc.

I bent over and kissed the marble-cold forehead and said farewell in my heart, and went downstairs without a word.

Half-an-hour later the district coach, a splendid vision, pulled up impetuously at the gates. I was ready to the moment. Mrs. Whitehead's frosty fingers touched mine for an instant; she imprinted a chill kiss on my cheek and looked relieved. "Good-bye, my dear Miss Hope, and God bless you," she said. "Strive to bear in mind through after life the lessons that have been instilled into you at Park Hill Seminary. Present my respectful compliments to Lady Chillington, and do not forget your catechism."

At this point the guard sounded an impatient summons on his bugle; Chirper picked up my box, seized me by the hand, and hurried with me to the coach. My luggage found a place on the roof; I was unceremoniously bundled inside; Chirper gave me another of her hearty kisses, and pressed a crooked sixpence into my hand "for luck," as she whispered. I am sure there was a real tear in her eye as she did so. Next moment we were off.

I kept my eyes fixed on the Seminary as long as it remained in

view, especially on the little corner room. It seemed to me that I must be a very wicked girl indeed, because I felt no real sorrow at quitting the place that had been my home for so many years. I could not feel anything but secretly glad, but furtively happy with a happiness which I felt ashamed of acknowledging even to myself. Miss Chinfeather's white and solemn face, as seen in her coffin, haunted my memory, but even of her I thought only with a sort of chastened regret. She had never touched my heart. There had been about her a bleakness of nature that effectually chilled any tender buds of liking or affection that might in the ordinary course of events have grown up and blossomed round her life. Therefore, in my child's heart there was no lasting sorrow for her death, no gracious memories of her that would stay with me, and smell sweet, long after she herself should be dust.

My eight miles' ride by coach was soon over. It ended at the railway station of the county town. The guard of the coach had, I suppose, received his secret instructions. Almost before I knew what had happened, I found myself in a first-class carriage, with a ticket for Eastbury in my hand, and committed to the care of another guard, he of the railway this time—a fiery-faced man, with immense red whiskers, who came and surveyed me as though I were some contraband article, but finished by nodding his head and saying with a smile, "I dessay we shall be good friends, miss, before we get to the end of our journey."

It was my first journey by rail, and the novelty of it filled me with wonder and delight. The train by which I travelled was a fast one, and after my first feeling of fright at the rapidity of the motion had merged into one of intense pleasure and exhilaration of mind, I could afford to look back on my recent coach experience with a sort of pitying superiority, as on a something that was altogether *rococo* and out of date. Already the rush of new ideas into my mind was so powerful that the old landmarks of my life seemed in danger of being swept clean away. Already it seemed days instead of only a brief hour or two since I had bidden Mrs. Whitehead farewell, and had taken my last look at Park Hill Seminary.

The red-faced guard was as good as his word; he and I became famous friends before I reached the end of my journey. At every station at which we stopped he came to the window to see how I was getting on, and whether I was in want of anything, and was altogether so kind to me that I was quite sorry to part from him when the train reached Eastbury, and left me, a minute later, standing, a solitary waif, on the little platform.

The one solitary fly of which the station could boast was laid under contribution. My little box was tossed on to its roof; I myself was shut up inside; the word was given, "To Deepley Walls;" the station was left behind, and away we went, jolting and rumbling along the quiet country lanes, and under over-arching trees, all aglow

just now with autumn's swift-fading beauty. The afternoon was closing in, and the wind was rising, sweeping up with melancholy soughs from the dim wooded hollows where it had lain asleep till the sun went down; garnering up the fallen leaves like a cunning miser, wherever it could find a hiding-place for them, and then dying suddenly down, and seeming to hold its breath as if listening for the footsteps of the coming winter.

In the western sky hung a huge tumbled wrack of molten cloud like the ruins of some vast temple of the gods of eld. Chasmed buttresses, battlements overthrown; on the horizon a press of giants, shoulder against shoulder, climbing slowly to the rescue; in mid-sky a praying woman; farther afield a huge head, and a severed arm the fingers of which were clenched in menace: all these things I saw, and a score others, as the clouds changed from minute to minute in form and brightness, while the stars began to glow out like clusters of silver lilies in the eastern sky.

We kept jolting on for so long a time through the twilight lanes, and the evening darkened so rapidly, that I began to grow frightened. It was like being lifted out of a dungeon, when the old fly drew up with a jerk, and a shout of "House there!" and when I looked out and saw that we were close to the lodge entrance of some park.

Presently a woman, with a child in her arms, came out of the lodge and proceeded to open the gate for us. Said the driver—"How's Johnny to-night?"

The woman shouted something in reply, but I don't think the old fellow heard her.

"Ay, ay," he called out, "Johnny will be a famous young shaver one of these days;" and with that, he whipped up his horse, and away we went.

The drive up the avenue, for such at the time I judged it to be, and such it proved to be, did not occupy many minutes. The fly came to a stand, and the driver got down and opened the door. "Now, young lady, here you are," he said; and I found myself in front of the main entrance to Deepley Walls.

It was too dark by this time for me to discern more than the merest outline of the place. I saw that it was very large, and I noticed that not even one of its hundred windows showed the least glimmer of light. It loomed vast, dark and silent, as if deserted by every living thing.

The old driver gave a hearty pull at the bell, and the muffled clamour reached me where I stood. I was quaking with fears and apprehensions of that unknown future on whose threshold I was standing. Would Love or Hate open for me the doors of Deepley Walls? I was strung to such a pitch that it seemed impossible for any lesser passion to be handmaiden to my needs.

What I saw when the massive door was opened was an aged woman, dressed like a superior domestic, who, in sharp accents,

demanded to know what we meant by disturbing a quiet family in that unseemly way. She was holding one hand over her eyes, and trying to make out our appearance through the gathering darkness. I stepped close up to her. "I am Miss Janet Hope, from Park Hill Seminary," I said, "and I wish to speak with Lady Chillington."

CHAPTER II.

THE MISTRESS OF DEEPLEY WALLS.

The words were hardly out of my lips when the woman shrank suddenly back, as though struck by an invisible hand, and gave utterance to an inarticulate cry of wonder and alarm. Then, striding forward, she seized me by the wrist, and drew me into the lamp-lighted hall. "Child! child! why have you come here?" she cried, scanning my face with eager eyes. "In all the wide world this is the last place you should have come to."

"Miss Chinfeather is dead, and all the young ladies have been sent to their homes. I have no home, so they have sent me here."

"What shall I do? What will her ladyship say?" cried the woman, in a frightened voice. "How shall I ever dare to tell her?"

"Who rang the bell, Dance, a few minutes ago? And to whom are you talking?"

The voice sounded so suddenly out of the semi-darkness at the upper end of the large hall, which was lighted only by a small oil lamp, that both the woman and I started. Looking in the direction from which the sound had come, I could dimly make out, through the obscurity, the figures of two women who had entered without noise through the curtained doorway, close to which they were now standing. One of the two was very tall, and was dressed entirely in black. The second one, who was less tall, was also dressed in black, except that she seemed to have something white thrown over her head and shoulders; but I was too far away to make out any details.

"Hush! don't you speak," whispered the woman warningly to me. "Leave me to break the news to her ladyship." With that, she left me standing on the threshold, and hurried towards the upper end of the hall.

The tall personage in black, then, with the harsh voice—high pitched, and slightly cracked—was Lady Chillington! How fast my heart beat! If only I could have slipped out unobserved I would never have braved my fortune within those walls again.

She who had been called Dance went up to the two ladies, curtsied deeply, and began talking in a low, earnest voice. Hardly, however, had she spoken a dozen words when the lesser of the two ladies flung up her arms with a cry like that of some wounded

creature, and would have fallen to the ground had not Dance caught her round the waist and so held her.

"What folly is this?" cried Lady Chillington, sternly, striking the pavement of the hall sharply with the iron ferrule of her cane. "To your room, Sister Agnes! For such poor weak fools as you solitude is the only safe companion. But, remember your oath! Not a word; not a word." With one lean hand uplifted, and menacing forefinger, she emphasised those last warning words.

She who had been addressed as Sister Agnes raised herself, with a deep sigh, from the shoulder of Dance, cast one long look in the direction of the spot where I was standing, and vanished slowly through the curtained arch. Then Dance took up the broken thread of her narration, and Lady Chillington, grim and motionless, listened without a word.

Even after Dance had done speaking, her ladyship stood for some time looking straight before her, but saying nothing in reply. I felt intuitively that my fate was hanging on the decision of those few moments, but I neither stirred nor spoke.

At length the silence was broken by Lady Chillington. "Take the child away," she said; "attend to her wants, make her presentable, and bring her to me in the Green Saloon after dinner. It will be time enough to-morrow to consider what must be done with her."

Dance curtsied again. Her ladyship sailed slowly across the hall, and passed out through another curtained doorway.

Dance's first act was to pay and dismiss the driver, who had been waiting outside all this time. Then, taking me by the hand, "Come along with me, dear," she said. "Why, I declare, you look quite white and frightened! You have nothing to fear, child. We shall not eat you—at least, not just yet; not till we have fed you up a bit."

At the end of a long corridor was Mrs. Dance's own room, into which I was now ushered. Scarcely had I made a few changes in my toilette when tea for two persons was brought in, and Mrs. Dance and I sat down to table. The old lady was well on with her second cup before she made any remark other than was required by the necessities of the occasion.

I have called her an old woman, and such she looked in my youthful eyes, although her years were only about sixty. She wore a dark brown dress and a black silk apron, and had on a cap with thick frilled borders, under which her grey hair was neatly snooded away. She looked ruddy and full of health. A shrewd, sensible woman, evidently; yet with a motherly kindness about her that made me cling to her with a child's unerring instinct.

"You look tired, poor thing," she said, as she leisurely stirred her tea; "and well you may, considering the long journey you have had to-day. I don't suppose that her ladyship will keep you more than ten minutes in the Green Saloon, and after that you can go to bed

as soon as you like. What a surprise for all of us your coming has been! Dear, dear! who would have expected such a thing this morning? But I knew by the twitching of my corns that something uncommon was going to happen. I was really frightened of telling her ladyship that you were here. There's no knowing how she might have taken it; and there's no knowing what she will decide to do with you to-morrow."

"But what has Lady Chillington to do with me in any way?" I asked. "Before this morning I never even heard her name; and now it seems that she is to do what she likes with me."

"That she will do what she likes with you, you may depend, dear," said Mrs. Dance. "As to how she happens to have the right so to do, that is another thing, and one about which it is not my place to talk nor yours to question me. That she possesses such a right you may make yourself certain. All that you have to do is to obey and to ask no questions."

I sat in distressed and bewildered silence for a little while. Then I ventured to say: "Please not to think me rude, but I should like to know who Sister Agnes is."

Mrs. Dance stirred uneasily in her chair and bent her eyes on the fire, but did not immediately answer my question.

"Sister Agnes is Lady Chillington's companion," she said at last. "She reads to her, and writes her letters, and talks to her, and all that, you know. Sister Agnes is a Roman Catholic, and came here from the convent of Saint Ursula. However, she is not a nun, but something like one of those Sisters of Mercy in the large towns, who go about among poor people and visit the hospitals and prisons. She is allowed to live here always, and Lady Chillington would hardly know how to get through the day without her."

"Is she not a relative of Lady Chillington?" I asked.

"No, not a relative," answered Dance. "You must try to love her a great deal, my dear Miss Janet; for if angels are ever allowed to visit this vile earth, Sister Agnes is one of them. But there goes her ladyship's bell. She is ready to receive you."

I had washed away the stains of travel, and had put on my best frock, and Dance was pleased to say that I looked very nice, "though, perhaps, a trifle more old-fashioned than a girl of your age ought to look." Then she laid down a few rules for my guidance when in the presence of Lady Chillington, and led the way to the Green Saloon, I following with a timorous heart.

Dance flung open the folding-doors of the big room. "Miss Janet Hope to see your ladyship," she called out; and next moment the doors closed behind me, and I was left standing there alone.

"Come nearer—come nearer," said her ladyship's cracked voice, as with a long, lean hand she beckoned me to approach.

I advanced slowly up the room, stopped and curtsied. Lady Chillington pointed out a high footstool about three yards from her chair.

I curtsied again, and sat down on it. During the interview that followed my quick eyes had ample opportunity for taking a mental inventory of Lady Chillington and her surroundings.

She had exchanged the black dress in which I first saw her for one of green velvet, trimmed with ermine. This dress was made with short sleeves and low body, so as to leave exposed her ladyship's arms, long, lean and skinny, and her scraggy neck. Her nose was hooked and her chin pointed. Between the two shone a row of large white, even teeth, which long afterwards I knew to be artificial. Equally artificial was the mass of short black, frizzly curls that crowned her head, which was unburdened with cap or covering of any kind. Her eyebrows were dyed to match her hair. Her cheeks, even through the powder with which they were thickly smeared, showed two spots of brilliant red, which no one less ignorant than I would have accepted without question as the last genuine remains of the bloom of youth. But at that first interview I accepted everything au pied de la lettre, without doubt or question of any kind.

Her ladyship wore long earrings of filigree gold. Round her neck was a massive gold chain. On her fingers sparkled several rings of price—diamonds, rubies and opals. In figure her ladyship was tall, and upright as a dart. She was, however, slightly lame of one foot, which necessitated the use of a cane when walking. Lady Chillington's cane was ivory-headed, and had a gold plate let into it, on which was engraved her crest and initials. She was seated in an elaborately-carved high-backed chair, near a table on which were the remains of a dessert for one person.

The Green Saloon was a large gloomy room; at least it looked gloomy as I saw it for the first time, lighted up by four wax candles where twenty were needed. These four candles being placed close by where Lady Chillington was sitting, left the other end of the saloon in comparative darkness. The furniture was heavy, formal and old-fashioned. Gloomy portraits of dead and gone Chillingtons lined the green walls, and this might be the reason why there always seemed to me a slight graveyard flavour—scarcely perceptible, but none the less surely there—about this room which caused me to shudder involuntarily whenever I crossed its threshold.

Lady Chillington's black eyes—large, cold and steady as Juno's own—had been bent upon me all this time, measuring me from head to foot with what I felt to be a slightly contemptuous scrutiny.

"What is your name, and how old are you?" she asked, with startling abruptness, after a minute or two of silence.

"Janet Hope, and twelve years," I answered, laconically. A feeling of defiance, of dislike to this bedizened old woman began to gnaw my child's heart. Young as I was, I had learned, with what bitterness I alone could have told, the art of wrapping myself round with a husk of cold reserve, which no one uninitiated in the ways of children could penetrate, unless I were inclined to let them. Sulki-

ness was the generic name for this quality at school, but I dignified it with a different term.

"How many years were you at Park Hill Seminary? and where did you live before you went there?" asked Lady Chillington.

"I have lived at Park Hill ever since I can remember anything. I don't know where I lived before that time."

"Are your parents alive or dead? If the latter, what do you remember of them?"

A lump came into my throat, and tears into my eyes. For a moment or two I could not answer.

"I don't know anything about my parents," I said. "I never remember seeing them. I don't know whether they are alive or dead."

"Do you know why you were consigned by the Park Hill people to this particular house—to Deepley Walls—to me, in fact?"

Her voice was raised almost to a shriek as she said these last words, and she pointed to herself with one claw-like finger.

"No, ma'am, I don't know why I was sent here. I was told to come, and I came."

"But you have no claim on me—none whatever," she continued, fiercely. "Bear that in mind: remember it always. Whatever I may choose to do for you will be done of my own free will, and not through compulsion of any kind. No claim whatever; remember that. None whatever."

She was silent for some time after this, and sat with her cold, steady eyes fixed intently on the fire. For my part, I sat as still as a mouse, afraid to stir, longing for my dismissal, and dreading to be questioned further.

Lady Chillington roused herself at length with a deep sigh, and a few words muttered under her breath.

"Here is a bunch of grapes for you, child," she said. "When you have eaten them it will be time for you to retire."

I advanced timidly and took the grapes, with a curtsey and a "Thank you, ma'am," and then went back to my seat.

As I sat eating my grapes my eyes went up to an oval mirror over the fire-place, in which were reflected the figures of Lady Chillington and myself. My momentary glance into its depths showed me how keenly, but furtively, her ladyship was watching me. But what interest could a great lady have in watching poor insignificant me? I ventured another glance into the mirror. Yes, she looked as if she were devouring me with her eyes. But hothouse grapes are nicer than mysteries, and how is it possible to give one's serious attention to two things at a time?

When I had finished the grapes, I put my plate back on the table.

"Ring that bell," said Lady Chillington. I rang it accordingly, and presently Dance made her appearance.

"Miss Hope is ready to retire," said her ladyship.

I arose, and going a step or two nearer to her, I made her my

most elaborate curtsey, and said, "I wish your ladyship a very good-night."

The ghost of a smile flickered across her face. "I am pleased to find, child, that you are not entirely destitute of manners," she said, and with a stately wave of the arm I was dismissed.

It was like an escape from slavery to hear the door of the Green Saloon close behind me, and to get into the great corridors and passages outside. I could have capered for very glee; only Mrs. Dance was a staid sort of person, and might not have liked it.

"Her ladyship is pleased with you, I am sure," she remarked, as we went along.

"That is more than I am with her," I answered, pertly. Mrs. Dance looked shocked.

"You must not talk in that way, dear, on any account," she said. "You must try to like Lady Chillington; it is to your interest to do so. But even should you never learn to like her, you must not let anyone know it."

"I'm sure that I shall like the lady that you call Sister Agnes," I said. "When shall I see her? To-morrow?"

Mrs. Dance looked at me sharply for a moment. "You think you shall like Sister Agnes, eh? When you come to know her, you will more than like her; you will love her. But perhaps Lady Chillington will not allow you to see her."

"But why not?" I said abruptly, and I could feel my eyes flash with anger.

"The why not I am not at liberty to explain," said Mrs. Dance, drily. "And let me tell you, Miss Janet Hope, there are many things under this roof of which no explanation will be given you, and if you are a wise, good girl, you will not ask too many questions. I tell you this simply for your own good. Lady Chillington cannot abear people that are always prying and asking 'What does this mean?' and 'What does the other mean?' A still tongue is the sign of a wise head."

Ten minutes later I had said my prayers and was in bed. "Don't go without kissing me," I said to Dance as she took up the candle.

The old lady came back and kissed me tenderly. "Heaven bless you and keep you, my dear!" she said, with solemn dignity. "There are those in the world who love you very dearly, and some day perhaps you will know all. I dare not say more. Good-night, and God bless you."

Mrs. Dance's words reached a chord in my heart that vibrated to the slightest touch. I cried myself silently to sleep.

How long I had been asleep I had no means of knowing, but I was awakened some time in the night by a rain of kisses, soft, warm, and light, on lips, cheeks and forehead. The room was pitch dark, and for a second or two I thought I was still at Park Hill, and that

Miss Chinfeather had come back from heaven to tell me how much she loved me. But this thought passed away like the slide of a magic lantern, and I knew that I was at Deepley Walls. The moment I knew this I put out my arms with the intention of clasping my unknown visitor round the neck. But I was not quick enough. The kisses ceased, my hands met each other in the empty air, and I heard a faint noise of garments trailing across the floor. I started up in bed, and called out, in a frightened voice, "Who's there?"

"Hush! not a word!" whispered a voice out of the darkness. Then I heard the door of my room softly closed, and I felt that I was alone.

I was left as wide awake as ever I had been in my life. My child's heart was filled with an unspeakable yearning, and yet the darkness and the mystery frightened me. It could not be Miss Chinfeather who had visited me, I argued with myself. The lips that had touched mine were not those of a corpse, but were instinct with life and love. Who, then, could my mysterious visitor be? Not Lady Chillington, surely! I half started up in bed at the thought. Just as I did so, without warning of any kind, a solemn muffled tramp became audible in the room immediately over mine. A tramp, slow, heavy, measured, from one end of the room to the other, and then back again. I slipped back into the bedclothes and buried myself up to the ears. I could hear the beating of my heart, oppressed now with a new terror before which the lesser one faded utterly. The very monotony of that dull measured walk was enough to unstring the nerves of a child, coming as it did in the middle of the night. I tried to escape from it by going still deeper under the clothes, but I could hear it even then. Since I could not escape it altogether, I had better listen to it with all my ears, for it was quite possible that it might come down stairs, and so into my room. Had such a thing happened, I think I should have died from sheer terror. Happily for me nothing of the kind took place; and, still listening, I fell asleep at last from utter weariness, and knew nothing more till I was awoke by a stray sunbeam smiting me across the eyes.

CHAPTER III.

A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY.

A GOLDEN sunbeam was shining through a crevice in the blinds; the birds were twittering in the ivy outside; oxen were lowing to each other across the park. Morning, with all her music, was abroad.

I started up in bed and rubbed my eyes. Within the house everything was as mute as the grave. That horrible tramping overhead had ceased—had ceased, doubtless, with the return of daylight, which would otherwise have shifted it from the region of the weird

to that of the commonplace. I smiled to myself as I thought of my terrors of the past night, and felt brave enough just then to have faced a thousand ghosts. In another minute I was out of bed, and had drawn up my blind, and flung open my window, and was drinking in the sweet peaceful scene that stretched away before me in long level lines to the edge of a far-off horizon.

My window was high up and looked out at the front of the hall. Immediately below me was a semicircular lawn, shut in from the park by an invisible fence, close shaven, and clumped with baskets of flowers glowing just now with all the brilliance of late autumn. The main entrance—a flight of shallow steps, and an Ionic portico, as I afterwards found—was at one end of the building, and was reached by a long straight carriage drive, the route of which could be traced across the park by the thicker growth of trees with which it was fringed. This park stretched to right and left for a mile either way. In front, it was bounded, a short half-mile away, by the high road, beyond which were level wide-stretching meadows, through which the river Adair washed slow and clear.

But chief of all this morning I wanted to be down among the flowers. I made haste to wash and dress, taking an occasional peep through the window as I did so, and trying to entice the birds from their hiding-places in the ivy. Then I opened my bed-room door, and then, in view of the great landing outside, I paused. Several doors, all except mine now closed, gave admittance from this landing to different rooms. Both landing and stairs were made of oak, black and polished with age. One broad flight of stairs, with heavy carved banisters, pointed the way below; a second and narrower flight led to the regions above. As a matter of course I chose the former, but not till after a minute's hesitation as to whether I should venture to leave my room at all before I should be called. But my desire to see the baskets of flowers prevailed over everything else. I closed my door gently and hurried down.

I found myself in the entrance-hall of Deepley Walls, into which I had been ushered on my arrival. There were the two curtained doorways through which Lady Chillington had come and gone. For the rest, it was a gloomy place enough, with its flagged floor, and its diamond-paned windows high up in the semicircular roof. A few rusty full-lengths graced the walls; the stairs were guarded by two effigies in armour; a marble bust of one of the Cæsars stood on a high pedestal in the middle of the floor; and that was all.

I was glad to get away from this dismal spot and to find myself in the passage which led to the housekeeper's room. I opened the door and looked in, but the room was vacant. Farther along the same passage I found the kitchen and other domestic offices. The kitchen clock was just on the point of six as I went in. One servant alone had come down. From her I inquired my way into the garden, and next minute I was on the lawn. The close-cropped grass was wet

with the heavy dew; but my boots were thick and I heeded it not, for the flowers were there within my very grasp.

Oh, those flowers! can I ever forget them? I have seen none so beautiful since. There can be none so beautiful out of Paradise.

One spray of scarlet geranium was all that I ventured to pluck. But the odours and the colours were there for all comers, and were as much mine for the time being as if the flowers themselves had belonged to me. Suddenly I turned and glanced up at the many-windowed house with a sort of guilty consciousness that I might possibly be doing wrong. But the house was still asleep—closed shutters or down-drawn blind at every window. I saw before me a substantial-looking red-brick mansion, with a high slanting roof, of not undignified appearance now that it was mellowed by age, but with no pretensions to architectural beauty. The sole attempt at outside ornamentation consisted of a few flutings of white stone, reaching from the ground to the second floor, and terminating in oval shields of the same material, on which had originally been carved the initials of the builder and the date of erection; but the summer's sun and the winter's rain of many a long year had rubbed both letters and figures carefully out. Long afterwards I knew that Deepley Walls had been built in the reign of the Third William by a certain Squire Chillington of that date, "out of my own head," as he himself put it in a quaint document still preserved among the family archives; and rather a muddled head it must have been in matters architectural.

After this, I ventured round by the main entrance, with its gravelled carriage sweep, to the other side of the house, where I found a long flagged terrace bordered with large evergreens in tubs placed at frequent intervals. On to this terrace several French windows opened—the windows, as I found later in the day, of Lady Chillington's private rooms. To the left of this terrace stood a plantation of young trees, through which a winding path that opened by a wicket into the private grounds invited me to penetrate. Through the green gloom I advanced bravely, my heart beating with all the pleasure of one who was exploring some unknown land. I saw no living thing by the way, save two grey rabbits that scuttered across my path and vanished in the undergrowth on the other side. Pretty frisky creatures! how I should like to have caught them, and fed them, and made pets of them as long as they lived!

Two or three hundred yards farther on the path ended with another wicket, now locked, which opened into the high road. About a mile away I could discern the roofs and chimneys of a little town. When I got back to the hall I found dear old Dance getting rather anxious at my long absence, but she brightened into smiles when I kissed her and told her where I had been.

"You must have slept well, or you would hardly look so rosy this morning," she said as we sat down to breakfast.

"I should have slept very well if I had not been troubled by the ghosts."

"Ghosts! my dear Miss Janet? You do not mean to say—" and the old lady's cheek paled suddenly, and her cup rattled in her saucer as she held it.

"I mean to say that Deepley Walls is haunted by two ghosts, one of which came and kissed me last night when I was asleep; while the other one was walking nearly all night in the room over mine."

Dance's face brightened, but still wore a puzzled expression. "You must have dreamed that someone kissed you, dear," she said. "If you were asleep you could not know anything about it."

"But I was awakened by it, and I am positive that it was no dream." Then I told her what few particulars there were to tell.

"For the future we must lock your bed-room door," she said.

"Then I should be more frightened than ever. Besides, a real ghost would not be kept out by locking the door."

"Well, dear, tell me if you are disturbed in the same way again. But as for the tramping you heard in the room overhead, that is easily explained. It was no ghost that you heard walking, but Lady Chillington." Then, seeing my look of astonishment, she went on to explain. "You see, my dear Miss Janet, her ladyship is a very peculiar person, and does many things that to commonplace people like you and me may seem rather strange. One of these little peculiarities is her fondness for walking about the room over yours at night. Now, if she likes to do this, I know of no reason why she should not do it. It is a little whim that does no harm to anybody; and as the house and everything in it are her own, she may surely please herself in such a trifle."

"But what is there in the room that she should prefer it to any other in the house for walking in by night?"

"What—is—there—in the room?" said the old lady, staring at me across the table with a strange, frightened look in her eyes. "What a curious question! The room is a common room, of course, with nothing in it out of the ordinary way; only, as I said before, it happens to be Lady Chillington's whim to walk there. So, if you hear the noise again, you will know how to account for it, and will have too much good sense to feel in the least afraid."

I had a half consciousness that Dance was prevaricating with me in this matter, or hiding something from me; but I was obliged to accept her version as the correct one, especially as I saw that any further questioning would be of no avail.

I did not see Lady Chillington that day. She was reported to be unwell, and kept her own rooms.

About noon a message came from Sister Agnes that she would like to see me in her room. When I entered she was standing by a square oak table, resting one hand on it while the other was pressed

to her heart. Her face was very pale, but her dark eyes beamed on me with a veiled tenderness that I could not misinterpret.

"Good-morrow, Miss Hope," she said, offering her white slender hand for my acceptance. "I fear that you will find Deepley Walls even duller than Park Hill Seminary."

Her tone was cold and constrained. I looked up earnestly into her face. Her lips began to quiver painfully. "Child! child! you must not look at me in that way," she cried.

Instinct whispered something in my ear. "You are the lady who came and kissed me when I was asleep!" I exclaimed.

Her brow contracted for a moment as if she were in pain. A hectic spot came out suddenly on either cheek, and vanished almost as swiftly. "Yes, it was I who came to your room last night," she said. "You are not vexed with me for doing so?"

"On the contrary, I love you for it."

Her smile, the sweetest I ever saw, beamed out at this. Gently she stroked my hair. "You looked so forlorn and weary last night," she said, "that after I got to bed I could not help thinking about you. I was afraid you would not be able to sleep in a strange place, so I could not rest till I had visited you: but I never intended to awake you."

"I do not mind how often I am awakened in the same way," I said. "No one has ever seemed to love me but you, and I cannot help loving you back."

"My poor child!" was all she said. We had sat down by this time close to the window, and Sister Agnes was holding one of my hands in hers and caressing it gently as she gazed dreamily across the park. My eyes, child-like, wandered from her to the room and then back again. The picture still lives in my memory as fresh as though it had been limned but yesterday.

A square whitewashed room, fitted up with furniture of unpolished oak. On the walls a few proof engravings of subjects taken from Sacred History. A small bookcase in one corner, and a *prie-dieu* in another. The floor uncarpeted, but polished after the French fashion. A writing-table; a large workbox; a heap of clothing for the poor; and lastly, a stand for flowers.

The features of Sister Agnes were as delicate and clearly cut as those of some antique statue, but their habitual expression was one of intense melancholy. Her voice was low and gracious: the voice of a refined and educated gentlewoman. Her hair was black, with here and there a faint silver streak; but the peculiar head-dress of white linen which she wore left very little of it visible. Disfiguring as this head-dress might have been to many people, in her case it served merely to enhance the marble whiteness and transparent purity of her complexion. Her eyebrows were black and well-defined; but as for the eyes themselves, I can only repeat what I said before—that their dark depths were full of tenderness and a sort of veiled

enthusiasm difficult to describe in words. Her dress was black, soft and coarse, relieved by deep cuffs of white linen. Her solitary ornament, if ornament it could be called, was a rosary of black beads. Not without reason have I been thus particular in describing Sister Agnes and her surroundings, as they who read will discover for themselves by-and-by.

Sister Agnes woke up from her reverie with a sigh, and began talking to me about my schooldays and my mode of life at Park Hill Seminary. It was a pleasure to me to talk, because I felt it was a pleasure to her to listen to me. And she let me talk on and on for I can't tell how long, only putting in a question now and again, till she knew almost as much about Miss Chinfeather and Park Hill as I knew myself. But she never seemed to grow weary. We were sitting close together, and after a time I felt her arm steal gently round my waist, pressing me closer still; and so, with my head nestling against her shoulder, I talked on, heedless of the time. O happy afternoon!

It was broken by a summons for Sister Agnes from Lady Chillington. "To-morrow, if the weather hold fine, we will go to Charke Forest and gather blackberries," said Sister Agnes as she gave me a parting kiss.

That night I went early to bed, and never woke till daybreak.

CHAPTER IV.

SCARSDALE WEIR.

I WAS up betimes next morning, long before Sister Agnes could possibly be ready to take me to the forest. So I took my sewing into the garden, and found a pleasant sunny nook, where I sat and worked till breakfast time. The meal was scarcely over when Sister Agnes sent for me. It made my heart leap with pleasure to see how her beautiful, melancholy face lighted up at my approach. Why should she feel such an interest in one whom she had never seen till a few hours ago? The question was one I could not answer; I could only recognise the fact and be thankful.

The morning was delicious: sunny, without being oppressive; while in the shade there was a faint touch of austerity like the first breath of coming winter. A walk of two miles brought us to the skirts of the forest, and in five minutes after quitting the high road we might have been a hundred miles away from any habitation, so utterly lost and buried from the outer world did we seem to be. Already the forest paths were half hidden by fallen leaves, which rustled pleasantly under our feet. By-and-by we came to a pretty opening in the wood, where some charitable soul had erected a rude rustic seat that was more than half covered with the initials of idle wayfarers. Here Sister Agnes sat down to rest. She had brought a volume of poems with her, and while she read I wandered about,

never going very far away, feasting on the purple blackberries, finding here and there a late-ripened cluster of nuts, trying to find out a nest or two among the thinned foliage, and enjoying myself in a quiet way much to my heart's content.

I don't think Sister Agnes read much that morning. Her gaze was oftener away from her book than on it. After a time she came and joined me in gathering nuts and blackberries. She seemed brighter and happier than I had hitherto seen her, entering into all my little projects with as much eagerness as though she were herself a child. How soon I had learned to love her! Why had I lived all those dreary years at Park Hill without knowing her? But I could never again feel quite so lonely—never quite such an outcast from that common household love which all the girls I had known seemed to accept as a matter of course. Even if I should unhappily be separated from Sister Agnes, I could not cease to love her; and although I had seen her for the first time barely forty-eight hours ago, my child's instinct told me that she possessed that steadfastness, sweet and strong, which allows no name that has once been written on its heart to be erased therefrom for ever.

My thoughts were running in some such groove, but they were all as tangled and confused as the luxuriant undergrowth around me. It must have been out of this confusion that the impulse arose which caused me to address a question to Sister Agnes that startled her as much as if a shell had exploded at her feet.

"Dear Sister Agnes," I said, "you seem to know my history, and all about me. Did you know my papa and mamma?"

She dropped the leaf that held her fruit, and turned on me a haggard, frightened face that made my own grow pale.

"What makes you think that I know your history?" she stammered out.

"You who are so intimate with Lady Chillington must know why I was brought to Deepley Walls: you must know something about me. If you know anything about my father and mother, oh! do please tell me; please do!"

"I am tired, Janet. Let us sit down," she said, wearily. So, hand in hand, we went back to the rustic seat and sat down.

She sat for a minute or two without speaking, gazing straight before her into some far-away forest vista, but seeing only with that inner eye which searches through the dusty chambers of heart and brain whenever some record of the past has to be brought forth to answer the questions of to-day.

"I do know your history, dear child," she said at length, "and both your parents were friends of mine."

"Were! Then neither of them is alive?"

"Alas! no. They have been dead many years. Your father was drowned in one of the Italian lakes. Your mother died a year afterwards."

All the sweet vague hopes that I had cherished in secret, ever since I could remember anything, of some day finding at least one of my parents alive, died out utterly as Sister Agnes said these words. My heart seemed to faint within me. I flung myself into her arms, and burst into tears.

Very tenderly and lovingly, with sweet caresses and words of comfort, did Sister Agnes strive to win me back to cheerfulness. Her efforts were not unsuccessful, and after a time I grew calmer and recovered my self-possession; and as soon as so much was accomplished we set out on our return to Deepley Walls.

As we rose to go, I said, "Since you have told me so much, Sister Agnes, will you not also tell me why I have been brought to Deepley Walls, and why Lady Chillington has anything to do with me?"

"That is a question, dear Janet, which I cannot answer," she said. "I am bound to Lady Chillington by a solemn promise not to reveal to you the nature of the secret bond which has brought you under her roof. That she has your welfare at heart you may well believe, and that it is to your interest to please her in every possible way is equally certain. More than this I dare not say, except there are certain pages of your history, some of them of a very painful character, which it would not be advisable that you should read till you shall be many years older than you are now. Meanwhile rest assured that in Lady Chillington, however eccentric she may seem to be, you have a firm and powerful friend; while in me, who have neither influence nor power, you have one who simply loves you, and prays night and day for your welfare."

"And you will never cease to love me, will you?" I said, just as we stepped out of the forest into the high road.

She took both my hands in hers and looked me straight in the face. "Never, while I live, Janet Hope, can I cease to love you," she said. Then we kissed and went on our way towards Deepley Walls.

"You are to dine with her ladyship to-day, Miss Janet," said Dance the same afternoon. "We must look out your best bib and tucker."

Dance seemed to think that a mighty honour was about to be conferred upon me, but for my own part I would have given much to forego the distinction. However, there was no help for it, so I submitted quietly to having my hair dressed and to being inducted into my best frock. I was dreadfully abashed when the footman threw open the dining-room door and announced in a loud voice, "Miss Janet Hope."

Dinner had just been served, and her ladyship was waiting. I advanced up the room and made my curtsey. Lady Chillington looked at me grimly, without relaxing a muscle, and then extended a lean forefinger, which I pressed respectfully. The butler indicated a chair, and I sat down. Next moment Sister Agnes glided in through

a side door, and took her place at the table, but considerably apart from Lady Chillington and me. I felt infinitely relieved by her presence.

Her ladyship looked as elaborately youthful, with her pink cheeks, her black wig, and her large white teeth, as on the evening of my arrival at Deepley Walls. But her hands shook a little, making the diamonds on her fingers scintillate in the candlelight as she carried her food to her mouth, and this was a sign of age which not all the art in the world could obviate. The table was laid out with a quantity of old-fashioned plate; indeed, the plate was out of all proportion to the dinner, which consisted of nothing more elaborate than some mutton broth, a roast pullet and a custard. But there was a good deal of show, and we were waited on assiduously by a respectable but fatuous-looking butler. There was no wine brought out, but some old ale was poured into her ladyship's glass from a silver flagon. Sister Agnes had a small cover laid apart from ours. Her dinner consisted of herbs, fruit, bread and water. It pained me to see that the look of intense melancholy which had lightened so wonderfully during our forest walk had again overshadowed her face like a veil. She gave me one long, earnest look as she took her seat at the table, but after that she seemed scarcely to be aware of my presence.

We had sat in grim silence for full five minutes, when Lady Chillington spoke.

"Can you speak French, child?" she said, turning abruptly to me.

"I can read it a little, but I cannot speak it," I replied.

"Nor understand what is said when it is spoken in your presence?"

"No, ma'am."

"So much the better," she answered with a grating laugh. "Children have long ears, and there is no freedom of conversation when they are present." With that she addressed some remarks in French to Sister Agnes, who replied to her in the same language. I knew nothing about my ears being long, but her ladyship's words had made them tingle as if they had been boxed. For one thing I was thankful—that no further remarks were addressed to me during dinner. The conversation in French became animated, and I had leisure to think of other things.

Dinner was quickly over, and at a signal from her ladyship, the folding doors were thrown open, and we defiled into the Green Saloon, I bringing up the rear meekly. On the table were fruit and flowers, and one small bottle of some light wine. The butler filled her ladyship's glass, and then withdrew.

"You can take a pear, little girl," said Lady Chillington. Accordingly I took a pear, but when I had got it I was too timid to eat it, and could do nothing but hold it between my hot palms. Had I

been at Park Hill Seminary, I should soon have made my teeth meet in the fruit; but I was not certain as to the proper mode of eating pears in society.

Lady Chillington placed her glass in her eye and examined me critically.

"Haie! haie!" she said. "That good Chinfeather has not quite eradicated our gaucherie, it seems. We are deficient in ease and aplomb. What is the name of that Frenchwoman, Agnes, who 'finished' Lady Kinbuck's girls?"

"You mean Madame Delclos."

"The same. Look out her address to-morrow, and remind me that you write to her. If mademoiselle here remain in England, she will grow up weedy, and will never learn to carry her shoulders properly. Besides, the child has scarcely two words to say for herself. A little Parisian training may prove beneficial. At her age a French girl of family would be a little duchess in bearing and manners, even though she had never been outside the walls of her pension. How is such an anomaly to be accounted for? It is possible that the atmosphere may have something to do with it."

Here was fresh food for wonder, and for such serious thought as my age admitted of. I was to be sent to a school in France! I could not make up my mind whether to be sorry or glad. In truth, I was neither wholly the one nor the other; the tangled web of my feelings was something altogether beyond my skill to unravel.

Lady Chillington sipped her wine absently awhile; Sister Agnes was busy with some fine needlework; and I was striving to elaborate a giant and his attendant dwarf out of the glowing embers and cavernous recesses of the wood fire, while there was yet an underlying vein of thought at work in my mind which busied itself desultorily with trying to piece together all that I had ever heard or read of life in a French school.

"You can run away now, little girl. You are de trop," said her ladyship, turning on me in her abrupt fashion. "And you, Agnes, may as well read to me a couple of chapters out of the 'Girondins.' What a wonderful man was that Robespierre! What a giant! Had he but lived, how different the history of Europe would have been from what we know it to-day."

I could almost have kissed her ladyship of my own accord, so pleased was I to get away. I made my curtsey to her, and also to Sister Agnes, whose only reply was a sweet, sad smile, and managed to preserve my dignity till I was out of the room. But when the door was safely closed behind me, I ran, I flew along the passages till I reached the housekeeper's room. Dance was not there, neither had candles yet been lighted. The bright moonlight pouring in through the window gave me a new idea.

I had not yet been down to look at the river! What time could be better than the present one for such a purpose? I had heard

some of the elder girls at Park Hill talk of the delights of boating by moonlight. Boating in the present case was out of the question, but there was the river itself to be seen. Taking my hat and scarf, I let myself out by a side door, and then sped away across the park like a hunted fawn, not forgetting to take an occasional bite at her ladyship's pear. To-night, for a wonder, my mind seemed purged of all those strange fears and stranger fancies engendered in it, some people would say, by superstition, while others would hold that they were merely the effects of a delicate nervous organisation and over-excitable brain re-acting one upon the other. Be that as it may, for this night they had left me, and I skipped on my way as fearlessly as though I were walking at mid-day, and with a glorious sense of freedom working within me, such, only in a more intense degree, as I had often felt on our rare holidays at school.

There was a right of public footpath across one corner of the park. Tracking this narrow white ribbon through the greensward, I came at length to a stile which admitted me into the high road. Exactly opposite was a second stile, opening on a second footpath, which I felt sure could lead to nowhere but the river. Nor was I mistaken. In another five minutes I was on the banks of the Adair.

To my child's eye, the scene was one of exquisite beauty. To-day, I should probably call it flat and wanting in variety. The equable full-flowing river was lighted up by a full and unclouded moon. The undergrowth that fringed its banks was silver-foliaged; silver-white rose the mists in the meadows. Silence everywhere, save for the low liquid murmur of the river itself, which seemed burdened with some love secret, centuries old, which it was vainly striving to tell in articulate words.

The burden of the beauty lay upon me and saddened me. I wandered slowly along the bank, watching the play of moonlight on the river. Suddenly I saw a tiny boat that was moored to an overhanging willow, and floated out the length of its chain towards the middle of the stream. I looked around. Not a creature of any kind was visible. Then I thought to myself: "How pleasant it would be to sit out there in the boat for a little while. And surely no one could be angry with me for taking such a liberty—not even the owner of the boat, if he were to find me there."

No sooner said than done. I went down to the edge of the river and drew the boat inshore by the chain that held it. Then I stepped gingerly in, half-frightened at my own temerity, and sat down. The boat glided slowly out again to the length of its chain and then became motionless. But it was motionless only for a moment or two. A splash in the water drew my attention to the chain. It had been insecurely fastened to a branch of the willow; my weight in the boat had caused it to become detached and fall into the water, and with horrified eyes I saw that I had now no means of getting back to the shore. Next moment the strength of the current carried

the boat out into mid-stream, and I began to float slowly down the river.

I sat like one paralysed, unable either to stir or speak. The willows seemed to bow their heads in mocking farewell as I glided past them. I heard the faint baying of a dog on some distant farm, and it sounded like a death-note in my frightened ears. Suddenly the spell that had held me was loosened, and I started to my feet. The boat heeled over, and but for a sudden instinctive movement backward I should have gone headlong into the river, and have ended my troubles there and then. The boat righted itself, veered half-round and then went steadily on its way down the stream. I sank on my knees and buried my face in my hands, and began to cry. When I had cried a little while it came into my mind that I would say my prayers. So I said them, with clasped hands and wet eyes; and the words seemed to come from me and affect me in a way that I had never experienced before. As I write these lines I have a vivid recollection of noticing how blurred and large the moon looked through my tears.

My heart was now quieted a little; I was no longer so utterly overmastered by my fears. I was recalled to a more vivid sense of earth and its realities by the low, melancholy striking of some village clock. I gazed eagerly along both banks of the river; but although the moon shone so brightly, neither house nor church nor any sign of human habitation was visible. When the clock had told its last syllable, the silence seemed even more profound than before. I might have been floating on a river that wound through a country never trodden by the foot of man, so entirely alone, so utterly removed from all human aid, did I feel myself to be.

I drew the skirt of my frock over my shoulders, for the night air was beginning to chill me, and contrived to regain the seat I had taken on first entering the boat. Whither would the river carry me, was the question I now put to myself. To the sea, doubtless. Had I not been taught at school that sooner or later all rivers emptied themselves into the ocean? The immensity of the thought appalled me. It seemed to chill the beating of my heart; I grew cold from head to foot. Still the boat held its course steadily, swept onward by the resistless current; still the willows nodded their fantastic farewells. Along the level meadows far and wide the white mist lay like a vast winding-sheet; now and then through the stillness I heard, or seemed to hear, a moan—a mournful wail, as of some spirit just released from earthly bonds, and forced to leave its dear ones behind. The moonlight looked cruel, and the water very, very cold. Someone had told me that death by drowning was swift and painless. Those stars up there were millions of miles away; how long would it take my soul, I wondered, to travel that distance—to reach those glowing orbs—to leave them behind? How glorious such a journey, beyond all power of thought, to track one's way among the worlds

that flash through space! In the world I should leave there would be one person only who would mourn for me—Sister Agnes, who would——But what noise was that?

A noise, low and faint at first, just taking the edge of silence with a musical murmur that seemed to die out for an instant now and again, then coming again stronger than before, and so growing by fine degrees louder and more confirmed, and resolving itself at last into a sound which could not be mistaken for that of anything but falling water. The sound was clearly in front of me; I was being swept resistlessly towards it. A curve of the river and a swelling of the banks hid everything from me. The sound was momently growing louder, and had distinctly resolved itself into the roar and rush of some great body of water. I shuddered and grasped the sides of the boat with both hands.

Suddenly the curve was rounded, and there, almost in front of me, was a mass of buildings, and there, too, spanning the river, was what looked to me like a trellis-work bridge, and on the bridge was a human figure. The roar and noise of the cataract were deafening, but louder than all was my piercing cry for help. He who stood on the bridge heard it. I saw him fling up his hands as if in sudden horror, and that was the last thing I did see. I sank down with closed eyes in the bottom of the boat, and my heart went up in a silent cry to Heaven. Next moment I was swept into Scarsdale Weir. The boat seemed to glide from under me; my head struck something hard; the water overwhelmed me, seized on me, dashed me here and there in its merciless arms; a noise as of a thousand cataracts filled my ears for a moment; and then I recollect nothing more.

(*To be continued.*)

SONNET.

Wouldst thou be happy, friend, forget, forget.
A curse—no blessing—Memory, thou art;
The very torment of a human heart.
Ah! yes, I thought, I still am young; and let
My heart but beat, I can be happy yet.
Upon a friendly face clear shone the light;
Without, low moaned the mountain's winds, and night
Closed our warm home—sad words of fond regret.
A voice which in my ear no more shall ring;
A look estranged in hate like lightning came,
My very soul within me died as flame
By strong wind spent. It was not grief, for dead
Was grief; nor love, for love in wrath had fled;
It was of both the last undying sting!

Julia Kavanagh.

THE BRETONS AT HOME.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.

A Breton Maiden.

THE long grey walls, the fortifications, the church towers and steeples, the clustering roofs of St. Malo came into view.

It is a charming sight after the long and often unpleasant night journey which separates St. Malo from Southampton. The boats leave much to be desired, and the sea very often, like Shakespeare's heroine, needs taming, but, unlike that heroine, will not be tamed, charm we never so wisely. As a rule, however, one is not in a mood to charm.

The Company are not accommodating. There are private cabins on board holding four, badly placed, uncomfortable, possessing the single advantage of privacy; but these managers would have them empty rather than allow two passengers to occupy one of them under the full fare of four. This is unamiable and exacting. In crowded times it may be all very right, but on ordinary occasions they would do well to follow the example of the more generous Norwegians, who place their state cabins holding four at the disposal of anyone paying the fare of three passengers.

After the long night-passage it is delightful to steam into the harbour of St. Malo. If the sea has been rough and unkindly, you at once pass from Purgatory to Paradise, with a relief those will understand who have experienced it. The scene is very charming. The coast, broken and undulating, is rich and fertile; very often hazy and dreamy; the landscape is veiled by a purple mist which reminds one very much of the Irish lakes and mountains.

Across the water lies Dinard, with its lovely views, its hilly thoroughfares, its English colony and its French patois. But the boat, turning the point, steams up the harbour and Dinard falls away. St. Malo lies ahead on the left, enclosed in its ancient grey walls, which encircle it like a belt; and on the right, farther away, rise the towers and steeples of St. Servan, also of ancient celebrity.

On the particular morning of which I write, as we steamed up the harbour towards our moorings, the quays looked gay and lively, the town very picturesque. It is so in truth, though some of its picturesqueness is the result of antiquity, dirt and dilapidation. But the fresh green trees lining the quay looked bright and youthful; a contrast with the ancient grey walls that formed their background. Vessels were loading and unloading, people hurried to and fro; many had evidently come down to see the boat in, and not a few were unmistakably English.

Here and there in the grey walls were the grand imposing gateways of the town. Above the walls rose the quaint houses, roof above roof, gable beside gable, tier beyond tier.

At the end of the quay the old Castle brought the scene to a fine conclusion. It was built by Anne of Brittany, and dates from the sixteenth century. One of its towers bears the singular motto or inscription: *Qui qu'en grogne, ainsi sera, c'est mon plaisir:* which seems to suggest that the illustrious lady owned a determined will and purpose. It is now turned into barracks; a lordly residence for the simple paysans who swelled the ranks of the Breton regiment occupying it at the time of which I write. They are said to be the best fighting soldiers in France, these Bretons. Of a low order of development, physically and mentally, they yet have a stubborn will which carries them through impossible hardships. They may be conquered, but they never yield.

The walk round the town upon the walls is extremely interesting. Gradually making way, the scene changes like the shifting slides of a panorama. Now the harbour lies before you, with its busy quays, its docks, its small crowd of shipping; very crowded we have never seen it. The old Castle rises majestically, looking all its three centuries of age and royal dignity; its four towers unspoilt by restoration.

Onward still and the walls rise sheer out of the rocks and the water. At certain tides, the sea dashes against them and breaks back upon itself in froth and foam and angry boom. Sight and sound are a wonderful nerve tonic. Countless rocks rise like small islands in every direction, stretching far out to sea. On a calm day it is all lovely beyond the power of words. The sky is blue and brilliant with sunshine. The sea receives the dazzling rays and returns them in a myriad flashes. The water seems to have as many tints as the rainbow, and they are as changing and beautiful and intangible. A distant vessel, passing slowly with all her sails set, almost becalmed, suggests

a dreamy and delicious existence that has not its rival. The coast of Normandy stretches far out of sight. In the distance are the Channel Islands, visible possibly on a clear day and with a strong glass. I know not how that may be.

Turn your gaze, and you have St. Malo lying within its grey walls. The sea on the right is all freedom and broad expanse; the town on the left is cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd. Extremes meet here, as they often do elsewhere.

It is a succession of slanting roofs, roof above roof, street beyond street. Many of the houses are very old and form wonderful groups, full of quaint gables and dormer windows, whilst the high roofs slant upwards and fall away in picturesque outlines. An artist might work here for years and still find fresh material to his hand. The streets are narrow, steep and tortuous; the houses, crowding one upon another, are many stories high; not a few seem ready to fall with age and decay. Only have patience, and all yields to time.

On one of the islets is the tomb of Chateaubriand, who was born in St. Malo and lived here many years. It was one of his last wishes to be buried where the sea, for ever playing and plashing around him, would chant him an everlasting requiem. Many will sympathise with the feeling. No scene could be more in accordance with the solemnity of death, the long waiting for the "eternal term;" more in unison with the pure spirit that could write such a prose-poem as *Atala*.

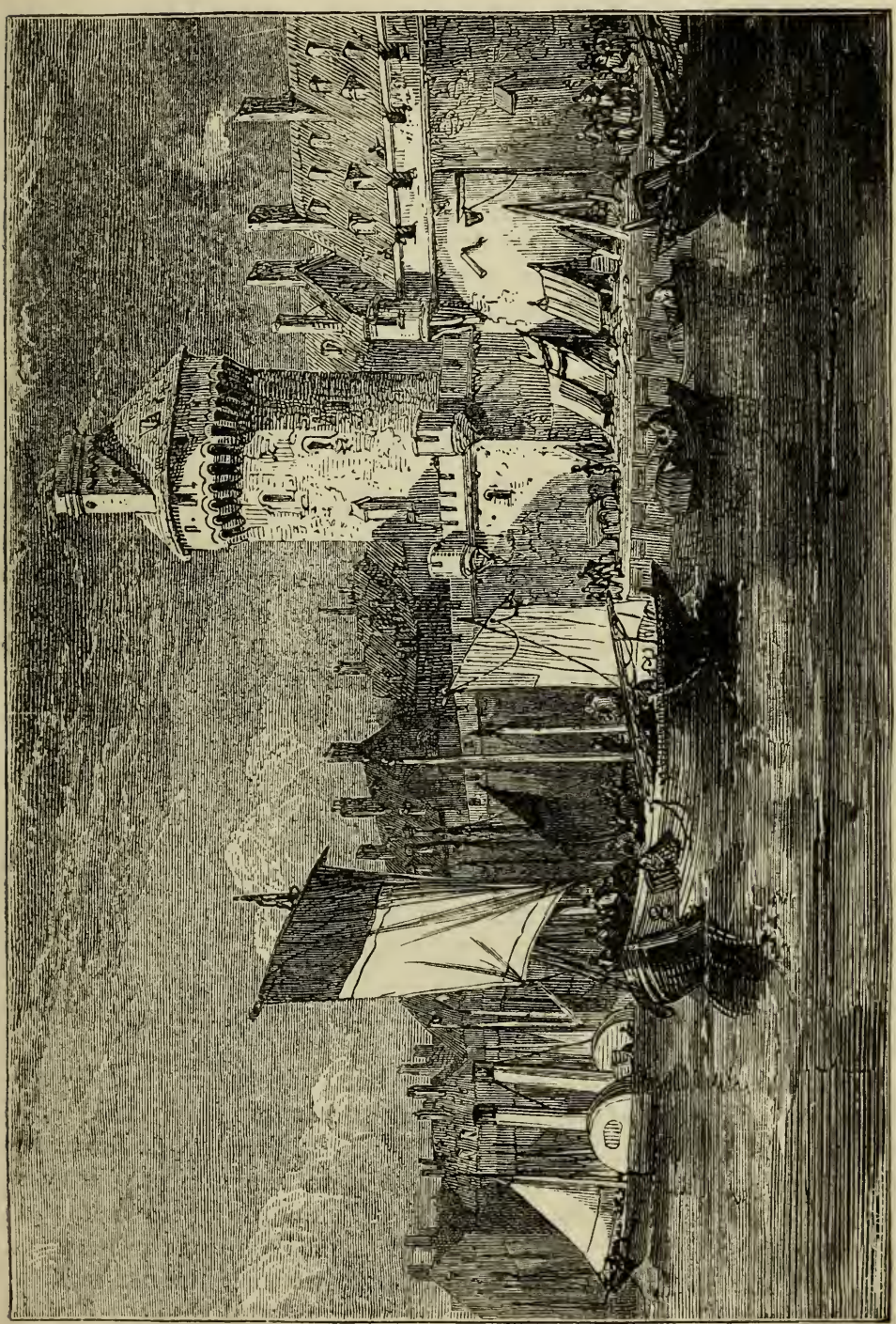
Nothing could have been lovelier than the day of our arrival at St. Malo; the special day of which I write; for St. Malo has seen our coming and going many times and in all weathers.

The crossing had been calm as a lake. Even H. C., who would sooner brave the tortures of a Spanish Inquisition than the ocean in its angry moods, and who has occasionally landed after a rough passage in an expiring condition: even H. C. was impatient to land and break his fast at the liberal table of the Hôtel de France—very liberal in comparison with the Hôtel Franklin. We had once dined at the table d' hôte of the Franklin, and found it a veritable Barmecide's feast, from which we got up far more hungry than we had sat down; a display so mean that we soon ceased to wonder that only two others graced the board with ourselves, and they, though Frenchmen, strangers to the place. The Hôtel de France was very different from this; if it left something to be desired in the way of refinement, it erred on the side of abundance.

Therefore, on landing this morning, we gave our lighter baggage in charge of the porter of the hotel, who knew us well, and according to his wont, gave us a friendly greeting. "Monsieur visite encore St. Malo," said he, "et nous apporte le beau temps. Soyez le bienvenu!" This was not in the least familiar—from a Frenchman.

We went on to the custom-house, and as we had nothing to declare the inspection was soon over. H. C. had left all his tea and cigars behind him at the Waterloo Station, in a small hand-bag which he had

put down for a moment to record a sudden fine phrenzy of poetical inspiration. Besides tea and cigars, the bag contained a copy of his



St. Malo.

beloved "Love Lyrics," without which he never travels, and a bunch of lilies of the valley, given him at the moment of leaving home by Lady Maria; an amiable but æsthetical aunt, who lives on crystallised

violets, and spends her time in endeavouring to convert all the young men of her acquaintance who go in for muscular Christianity to her æsthetical way of thinking.

Leaving the custom-house, we crossed the quay, the old castle in front of us, and passing through the great gateway, immediately found ourselves at the Place Chateaubriand and the Hôtel de France. For the hotel forms part of the building in which Chateaubriand lived.

We had a very short time to devote to St. Malo. A long journey still lay before us, for we wished to reach Morlaix that night. There was the choice of taking the train direct, or of crossing by boat to Dinard, and so joining the train from St. Malo, which reached Dinan after a long round. The latter seemed preferable, since it promised more variety, though shortening our stay at the old town. But, as Madame wisely remarked, it would give us sufficient time for luncheon, and an extra hour or so in St. Malo could not be very profitably spent.

So before long we were once more going down the quay, in company with the porter—whose lamentations at our abrupt departure were no doubt sincere as well as politic—and a truck carrying our goods and chattels. As yet, they were modest in number and respectable in appearance. H. C. had not commenced his raid upon the old curiosity shops; had not yet encumbered himself with endless packages, from deal boxes containing old silver, to worm-eaten, fourteenth century carved-wood monks and madonnas, carefully wrapped in brown paper, and bound head, hand and foot (where these essentials were not missing) with cord. All this came in due time, but to-day we were still dignified.

We passed without the walls and went down the quay. All our surroundings were gay and brilliant. Everything was life and movement, the life and movement of a Continental town. The "gentle gales" wooed the trees, and the trees made music in the air. The sun shone as it can only shine out of England. The sky, wearing its purest blue, was flecked with white clouds pure as angels' wings. The boat we had recently left was discharging cargo, and her steam was quietly dying down.

Four old women—each must have been eighty, at least—were seated on a bench, knitting and smiling and looking as placid and contented as if the world and the sunshine had been made for them alone, and it was their duty to enjoy it to the utmost. It was impossible to sketch them: Time and Tide wait for no man, and even now the whistle of the Dinard boat might be heard shrieking its impatient warning round the corner: but we took the old women with an instantaneous camera, and with wonderful result. It was all over before they had time to pose and put on expressions; and when they found they had been photographed, they thought it the great event of their lives. The mere fact is sufficient with these good folk; possession of the likeness is a very secondary consideration.

We left them crooning and laughing and casting admiring glances after H. C.— even at eighty years of age: possibly with a sigh to their lost youth.

Then we turned where the walls bend round and came in sight of the boat, steaming alongside the small stone landing-place and preparing for departure.

The passengers were not numerous. A few men and women; the latter with white caps and large baskets, who had evidently been over to St. Malo for household purposes, and were returning with the resigned air—it is very pathetic—that country women are so fond of wearing when they have been spending money and lessening the weight of the stocking which contains their treasured hoard.

We mounted the bridge, which, being first-class and an extra two or three sous, was deserted. These thrifty people would as soon think of burning down their cottages, as of wasting two sous in a useless luxury—all honour to them for the principle. But we, surveying human nature from an elevation, felt privileged to philosophise.

And if this human nature was interesting, what about the natural world around us? The boat loosed its moorings when time was up, and the grey walls of St. Malo receded; the innumerable roofs, towers and steeples grew dreamy and indistinct, dissolved and disappeared. The water was still blue and calm and flashing with sunlight. To the right lay the sleeping ocean; ahead of us, Dinard. Land rose on all sides; bays and creeks ran upwards, out of sight; headlands, rich in verdure, magnificently wooded; houses standing out, here lonely and solitary, there clustering almost into towns and villages; the mouth of the Rance, leading up to Dol and Dinan, which some have called the Rhine of France, and everyone must think a stream lovely and romantic.

Most beautiful of all seemed Dinard, which we rapidly approached. In twenty minutes we had passed into the little harbour beyond the pier. It was quite a bustling quay, with carriages for hire, and men with barrows touting noisily for custom, treading upon each other's heels in the race for existence; cafés and small hotels in the background.

Having plenty of time, we preferred to walk to the station, and consigned our baggage to the care of a deaf and dumb man, who disappeared with everything like magic, left us high and dry upon the quay to follow more leisurely, and to hope that we were not the victims of misplaced confidence. It looked very much like it.

A steep climb brought us to the heights of Dinard. Nothing could be more romantic. Here were no traces of antiquity; everything was aggressively modern; all beauty lay in scenery and situation. Humble cottages embowered in roses and wisteria; stately châteaux standing in large luxuriant gardens flaming with flowers, proudly secluded behind great iron gates. At every opening the

sea, far down, lay stretched before us. Precipitous cliffs, rugged rocks where flowers and verdure grew in wild profusion, led sheer to the water's edge. Land everywhere rose in a dreamy atmosphere; St. Malo and St. Servan across the bay in the distance. It was a wealth of vegetation; trees in full foliage, masses of gorgeous flowers, that you had only to stretch out your hand and gather; the blue sky over all. A scene we sometimes realise in our dreams, rarely in our waking hours—as we saw it that day. On the far-off water below small white-winged boats looked as shadowy and dreamy as the far-off fleecy clouds above.

But we could not linger. We passed away from the town and the sea and found ourselves in the country—the station seemed to escape us like a will-o'-the-wisp. Presently we came to where two roads met—which of them led to the station? No sign-post, no cottage. We should probably have taken the wrong one—who does not on these occasions?—when happily a priest came in sight, with stately step and slow reading his breviary. Of him we asked the way, and he very politely set us right, in French that was refreshing after the patois around us—he was evidently a cultivated man; and offered to escort us.

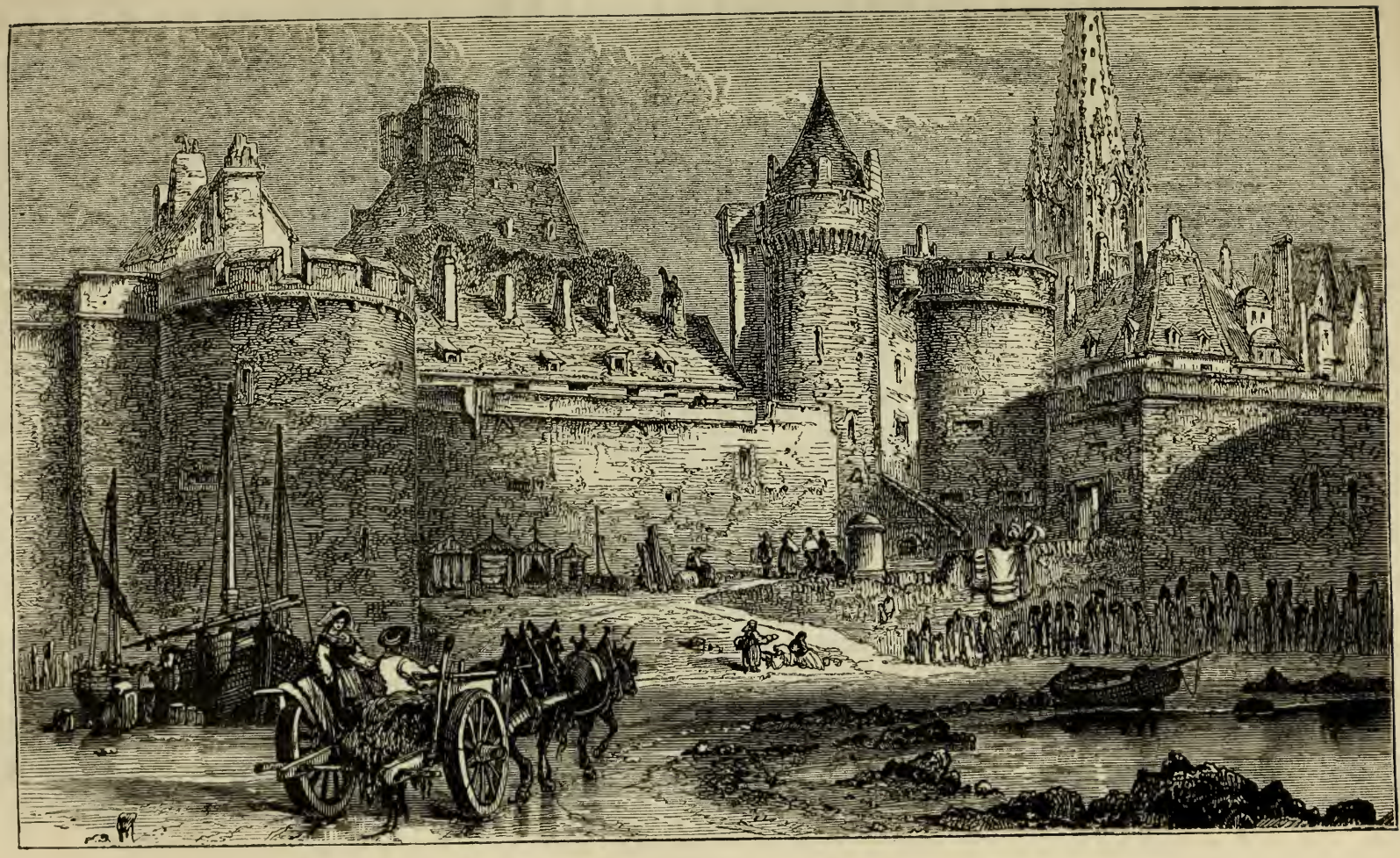
As this was unnecessary, we thanked him and departed; and, arriving soon after at the station, found our deaf and dumb porter had not played us false. He was cunning enough to ask us three times his proper fare, and when we gave him half his demand seemed surprised at so much liberality. Conversation had to be carried on with paper and pencil, and by signs and tokens.

The train started after a great flourish of trumpets. We had a journey of many hours before us through North Brittany; for Brittany is a hundred years behind the rest of France, and however slow the trains may be in Fair Normandy they are still slower in the Breton Provinces. In due time we reached Dinan, when we joined the train that had come round from St. Malo.

Nothing in Brittany is more lovely and striking than the situation of Dinan. It overlooks the Rance, and from the train we looked down into an immense valley.

Everywhere the eye rested upon a profusion of wild uncultivated verdure. The granite cliffs were steep and wooded. Far in the depths "the sacred river ran." A few boats and barges sailing up and down, passed under the lovely viaduct; Brittany peasant girls were putting off from the shallow bank with small cargoes of provisions, evidently coming from some market. Under the rugged cliffs ran a long row of small, unpretending houses, level with the river; a paradise sheltered, one would think, from all the winds of heaven: yet even here, no doubt, the east wind finds a passage for its sharp tooth to warp the waters.

Further on one caught sight of an old church, evidently in the hands of the Philistines, under process of restoration, and an ancient



ST. MALO.

monastery. The town crowned the cliffs, but very little could be seen beyond churches and steeples. We left it to a future time.

The train went through beautiful and undulating country until it reached Lamballe, picturesquely placed on the slope of a hill watered by a small stream, and crowned by the ancient and romantic ruins of the Castle which belonged to the Counts of Penthièvre, and was dismantled by Cardinal Richelieu. A fine Gothic building, of which we easily traced the outlines. The present church of Notre Dame was formerly the chapel of the Castle.

Here we longed to explore, but it did not enter into our plans. So, also, the interesting town of Guingamp had to be passed over for the present.

For we were impatient to see Morlaix. Having heard much of its picturesqueness and antiquity, we hoped for great things. Yet our experiences began in an adventurous and not very agreeable manner.

Darkness had fallen when we reached the old town, after a long and tedious journey. Nothing is so tiring as a slow train, which crawls upon the road and lingers at every station. Of Morlaix we could see nothing. We felt ourselves rumbling over a viaduct which seemed to reach the clouds, and far down we saw the lights of the town shining like stars; so that, with the stars above, we seemed to be placed between two firmaments; but that was all. Everything was wrapped in gloom and mystery. The train steamed into the station and its few lights only rendered darkness yet more visible. The passengers stumbled across the line in a small flock to the point of exit.

We had been strongly recommended to the Hôtel d'Europe, as strongly cautioned against any other; but we found that the omnibus was not at the station; nor any flys; nothing but the omnibus of a small hotel we had never heard of, in charge of a conductor, rough, uncivil, and less than half sober.

This conductor—who was also the driver—declined to take us to any other hotel than his own; would listen to no argument or reason. Had he been civil, we might have accepted the situation, but it seemed evident that an inn employing such a man was to be avoided. Unwilling to be beaten, we sought the station-master and his advice.

"Why is the omnibus of the Hôtel d'Europe not here?" we asked.

"No doubt the hotel is full. It is the moment of the great fair, you know."

But we did not know. We knew of Leipzig Fair by sad experience, of Bartholomew Fair by tradition, of the Fair of Novgorod by hearsay; but of Morlaix Fair we had never heard.

"What is the fair?" we asked, with a sinking heart.

"The great Horse Fair," replied the station-master. "Surely you have heard of it? No one ever visits Morlaix at the time of the fair unless he comes to buy or sell horses."

Having come neither to buy nor sell horses, we felt crushed, and hoped for the deluge. I proposed to re-enter the train and let it take us whither it would—it mattered not. H. C. calmly suggested suicide.

"What is to be done?" he groaned. "The man refuses to take us to the Hôtel d'Europe. He is not sober; it is useless to argue with him."

"The fair again," laughed the official. "It is responsible for everything just now, and Bretons are not the most sober people at the best of times. Still, if you wish to go to the Hôtel d'Europe, the man must take you. There is no other conveyance and he is bound to do so. But I warn you that it will be full, or the omnibus would have been here."

Turning to the man, he threatened to report him, gave him his orders, and said he should inquire on the morrow how they had been carried out. We struggled into the omnibus, which was already fairly packed with men who looked very much like horsedealers, the surly driver slammed the door, and the station-master politely bowed us away.

The curtain dropped upon Act I.; Comedy or Tragedy as the event might prove.

It soon threatened to be Tragedy. The omnibus tore down a steep hill as if the horses as well as the driver had been indulging, swayed from side to side and seemed every moment about to overturn. Now the passengers were all thrown to the right of the vehicle, now to the left, and now they all collided in the centre. The enraged driver was having his revenge upon us, and we repented our boldness in trusting our lives in his hands. But the sturdy Bretons accepted the situation so calmly that we felt there must still be a chance of escape.

So it proved. In due time it drew up at the Hôtel d'Europe with the noise of an artillery waggon, and out came M. Hellard, the landlord. His appearance, with his white hair and benevolent face, was sufficient to recommend him, to begin with. We felt we had done wisely, and made known our wants.

"I am very sorry," he replied, "but, gentlemen, I am quite full. There is not a vacant room in the hotel from roof to basement."

"Put us anywhere," we persisted, for it would never do to be beaten at last: "the coal-cellar; a couple of cupboards; anything; but don't send us away."

The landlord looked puzzled. He had a tall, fine presence and a handsome face; not in the least like a Frenchman. "I assure you that I have neither hole nor corner nor cupboard at your disposal," he declared. "I have sent away a dozen people in the last hour who arrived by the last train. Why did you not send me word you were coming?"

"We are only two, not a dozen," we urged. "And we knew

nothing of this terrible Fair, or we should not have come at all. But as we are here, here we must remain."

With that we left the omnibus and went into the hall, enjoying the landlord's perplexed attitude. But when did a case of this sort ever fail to yield to persuasion? The last resource has very seldom been reached, however much we may think it; and an emergency begets its own remedy. The remedy in this instance was the landlady. Out she came at the moment from her bureau, all gestures and possibilities; we felt saved.

"Mon cher," she exclaimed—not to H. C., but to her spouse—"don't send the gentlemen away at this time of night, and consign them to you know not what fate. Something can be managed. *Tenez!*" with uplifted hands and an inspiration, "ma bouchère! Mon cher, ma bouchère!" (Voice, exclamation, gesture, general inspiration, the whole essence would evaporate if translated.) "Ma bouchère has two charming rooms that she will be delighted to give me. It is only a cat's jump from here," she added, turning to us; "you will be perfectly comfortable, and can take your meals in the hotel. To morrow I shall have rooms for you."

So the luggage was brought down; the landlord went through a passage at arms with the driver, who demanded double fare, and finally went off with nothing but a promise of punishment. We had triumphed, and thought our troubles were over: they had only begun.

Our remaining earthly desire was for strong tea, followed by repose. We had had very little sleep the previous night on board the boat, and the day had been long and tiring.

"The tea immediately; but you will have to wait a little for the rooms," said Madame. "My bouchère is at the theatre to-night; we must all have a little distraction sometimes; it will be over a short quarter of an hour, and then I will send to her."

Madame was evidently a woman of capacity. The short quarter of an hour might be profitably spent in consuming the tea: after that—a delicious prospect of rest, for which we longed as the Peri longed for Paradise.

"Meanwhile, perhaps messieurs will walk into the café of the hotel, awaiting their rooms," said the landlord.

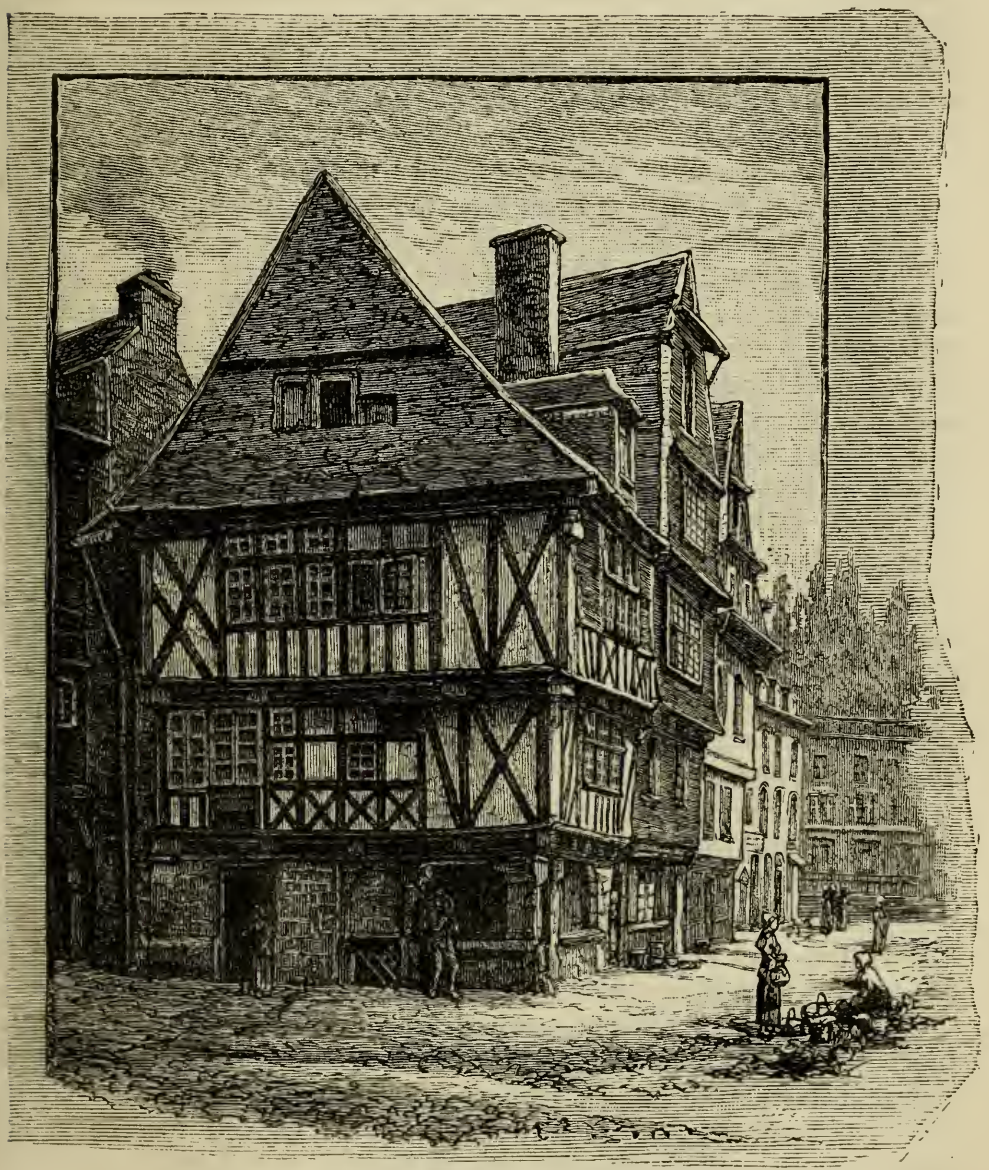
"Where tea shall be served," concluded Madame, giving directions to a waiter who stood by, a perfect Image of Misery, his face tied up after the fashion of the French nation suffering from toothache and a *fluxion.*

"But the fire is out in the kitchen," objected Misery, in the spirit of Pierrot's friend.

"Then let it be re-lighted," commanded Madame. "At such times as these, the fire has not the right to be out."

Monsieur marshalled us into the café, a large long room forming part of the hotel; by no means the best waiting-place after a long

and tiring day. It was hot, blazing with gas, clouded with smoke—the usual French smoke, worse than the worst of English tobacco. The room was crowded, the noise pandemonium. Card playing occupied some tables, dominoes others. The company was very much what might be expected at a Horse Fair: loud, familiar,



MORLAIX.

slightly inclined to be quarrelsome; no nerves. Our host joined a card table, evidently taking up his game where our arrival had interrupted it. He soon became absorbed and forgot our existence; our hope was in Madame.

We waited in patience; the short quarter of an hour developed into a long half-hour, when tea arrived: small cups, small tea

pot, usual strainer, straw-coloured infusion; still, it just saved our reason. H. C. felt that he should never write another line of poetry; the tobacco fumes had taken an opium effect upon me, and I began to see visions and imagined ourselves in Dante's Inferno. We looked with mild reproach at the waiter. He quite understood; a guilty conscience needed no words; and explained that the chef had let out the fire. As the chef was at that moment in the café playing cards, as absorbed and excited as anyone, no wonder that he had forgotten his ordinary duties.

"And our rooms?" we asked. "Are they ready?"

"The theatre is not yet over," replied the waiter. "Madame is on the look-out. The play is extra long to-night in honour of the fair."

That miserable fair!

The tea revived us: it always does. "I feel less like expiring," murmured H. C., with a tremulous sigh. "But this place is like a furnace seven times heated, and the noise is pandemonium in revolt. What would Lady Maria think of this? Why need that frivolous butcher-woman have gone to the theatre to-night of all nights in the year? And why need all these people have stayed away from it? Why is everything upside down and cross and contrary? And why are we here at all?"

H. C. was evidently on the verge of brain fever.

We waited; there was nothing else for it. It was torture; but others have been tortured before now; and some have survived, and some have died of it. We felt that we should die of it. Half past eleven had come and gone; midnight was about to strike. Oh that we had gone on with that wretched omnibus, no matter what the end. Yes; it had come to that.

At last human nature could bear it no longer: we appealed to the landlord. He looked up from his game, flushed, startled and repentant.

"What! have they not taken you to the bouchère!" he exclaimed. "Why the theatre was over long ago, and no doubt everything is arranged. You shall be conducted at once."

Misery, looking himself more dead than alive (he informed us presently in an access of confidence that he had had four teeth taken out that day and felt none the better for it), was told off to act as guide, and shouldering such baggage as we needed for the night, stepped forth. We pitied him, he seemed so completely at the end of all things; and feeling, by comparison, that there was a deeper depth of suffering than our own, we revived. His name was not Misery, but André.

Monsieur accompanied us to the door and wished us Good-night. Madame had disappeared and was nowhere to be found; the lights were out in her bureau. It looked very much as if she, too, had gone to bed and forgotten us. "Cette chère dame is tired," said the sympathetic landlord. "We really have no rest day or night at the

time of the fair. But you may depend upon it she has made it all right with her bouchère."

So we departed in faith. It was impossible to be angry with Monsieur, though we felt neglected. He was so unlike the ordinary run of landlords that one could only repose confidence in him and overlook small inattentions. He had a way of throwing himself into your interests, and making them his own for the time being. But I fear that his memory was very short.

We departed with thanksgiving, and followed our guide. I cannot say that we trod in his footsteps, for, too far gone to lift his feet bravely, he merely shuffled along the pavement. With one hand he supported the luggage on his shoulder; with the other he carried a candle, ostensibly to light our pathway, in reality only complicating matters and the darkness. As we turned round by the hotel, the clocks struck the witching hour. H. C. shivered and looked about for ghosts. It was really a very ghostly scene and atmosphere. In spite of the occasion of the fair, the town was in repose. The theatre was long over; the extra entertainment on account of the fair had been a mere invention of the imaginative waiter's; people had very properly gone home to bed, and lights were out. No noisy groups were abroad, making night hideous with untimely revelry.

We formed a strange procession. Our little guide slipped and shuffled, hardly able to put one foot before the other. He wore house-slippers of list or wool, and made scarcely any noise as he went along. Every now and then he groaned in the agonies of tooth-ache; and each time H. C. shivered and looked back for the ghost. It was excusable, for the candle threw weird shadows around, which flitted about like phantoms playing at hide-and-seek. The night was so calm that the flame scarcely flickered.

In spite of the darkness, we could see how picturesque was the old town, and we longed for daylight. Against the dark background of sky the yet darker outlines of the houses stood out mysteriously. We turned into a narrow street where opposite neighbours might almost have shaken hands with each other from the upper windows. Wonderful gabled roofs succeeded each other in a long procession. There seemed not a vestige of anything modern in the whole thoroughfare. We were in a scene of the Middle Ages, back in those far-off days.

Here and there a light shining in a room revealed a large latticed window, running the whole width of the house. In spite of André's fatigue and burden, we could only stand and gaze. No human power could mesmerise us, but the window did so.

What could be more startlingly weird and picturesque than the bright reflection of these latticed panes, surrounded by this intense darkness, these mysterious outlines? Almost we expected to see a ghostly vision advance from the interior, and, opening the lattice with a skeleton hand, ask our pleasure at thus invading their soli-

tude at the witching hour—for the vibration of the bells tolling midnight was still upon the air, travelling into space, perhaps announcing to other worlds that to us another day was dead, another day was born.

But no ghost appeared. A very human figure, however, did so. It looked down upon us for a moment, and mistaking our rapt gaze at the antiquities—of which it did not form a part—for mere vulgar curiosity, held up a reproving hand. Then, catching sight of H. C., it darted forward, looked breathlessly into the night, and seemed also mesmerised as by a revelation.

We quietly went our way, leaving the spell to work itself out. Our footsteps echoed in the silent night, with the running accompaniment of a double-shuffle from Misery. No other sound broke the stillness; we were absolutely alone with the ancient houses, the stars and the sky. It might have been a Mediæval City of the Dead, unpeopled since the days of its youth. Our candle burned on in the hand of André; our reflections danced and played about us: one hears of the Dance of Death—this was the Dance of Ghosts—a natural sequence; ghostly shadows flitted out of every doorway, down every turning.

At last we emerged on to an open space, partly filled by a modern building with a hideous roof, evidently the market place. Here we ascended to a higher level. Ancient outlines still surrounded us, but were interrupted by modern ones also. Square roofs and straight lines broke the continuity of the picturesque gabled roofs and latticed windows. Ichabod may be written upon the lintels of all that is ancient and disappearing, all that is modern and hideous. The spirit and beauty of the past are dead and buried.

"We are almost there," said André, with a sigh that would have been profound if he had had strength to make it so. "A few more yards and we arrive."

We too sighed with relief, though the midnight walk amidst these wonders of a bygone age had proved refreshing and awakening. But we sympathised with our guide, who was only kept up by necessity.

We passed out of the market place again into a narrow street, dark, silent and gloomy. At the third or fourth house, André exclaimed "Nous voilà!" and down went the baggage like a dead-weight in front of a closed doorway.

The house was in darkness: no sight or sound could be seen or heard; everyone seemed wrapped in slumber; a strange condition of things if we were expected. The man rang the bell: a loud, long peal. No response; no light, no movement; profound silence.

"C'est drôle!" he murmured. "The theatre" (that everlasting theatre!) "has been long over and Madame must have returned. Where can she be?"

"Probably in bed," replied H. C. "We have little chance of

following her excellent example if this is to go on. There must be some mistake, and we are not expected."

"Impossible," returned André. "La Patrone never forgets anything and must have arranged it all." He, too, had unlimited confidence in Madame, but for once it was misplaced.

GRANDE RUE, MORLAIX.

Not only the house, but the whole street was in darkness. Not the ghost of a glimmer appeared from any window or doorway; not a gas-light from end to end. Oil lamps ought to have been slung across from house to house to keep up the character of the thoroughfare; but here, apparently, consistency was less thought of than economy. We looked and looked, every moment expecting a cloaked watchman to appear, with lantern casting weird flashes around and a

sepulchral voice calling the hour and the weather. But *Il Sereno* of Majorca had no counterpart in Morlaix; the darkness, silence and solitude remained unbroken.

We were the sole group of humanity visible, and must have appeared singular as the still flaring candle lighted up our faces, pale and anxious from fatigue, threw out in huge proportions the head of our guide, bound up as if prepared for the grave for which he was fast qualifying.

After a time Misery gave another peal at the bell, and, borrowing a stick, drummed a tattoo upon the door that might have waked the departed Mediævals. This at length brought forth fruit.

A latticed window was opened, a white figure appeared, a night-capped head was put forth without ceremony, a feminine voice, sleepy and indignant, demanded who thus disturbed the sacred silence of the night.

"The gentlemen are here," said André, mildly. "Come down and open the door. A pretty reception this, for tired travellers."

"What gentlemen?" asked the voice, which belonged to no less a person than Madame la bouchère herself.

"Parbleu! why the gentlemen you are expecting. The gentlemen la Patrone sent to you about and that you agreed to lodge for the night."

"André—I know your voice, though I cannot see your form—you have been taking too much, and to-morrow I shall complain to Madame Hellard. How dare you wake quiet people out of their first sleep?"

"First sleep! Has la bouchère not been to the theatre?"

"Theatre, you good-for-nothing! Do I ever join in such frivolities? I have been in bed and asleep ever since ten o'clock—where you ought to be at this hour of the night."

"But la Patrone sent to engage rooms for these gentlemen and you promised to give them. They have come. Open the door. We cannot stay here till daybreak."

"You will stay there till doomsday if it depends on my opening to you. La Patrone never sent and I never promised. I have only one small empty bed in my house, and in the other bed in the same room two of my boys are sleeping. I am very sorry for the gentlemen. My compliments to la Patrone, and before sending gentlemen to me at midnight, she ought to find out if I can accommodate them. Good-night to you, and let us have no more rioting and bell-ringing."

The nightcapped head was withdrawn, the lattice was sharply closed, and we were left to make the best of the situation.

It was serious: nearly one in the morning, the whole town slumbering, and we "homeless, ragged, and tanned."

To remain was useless. Not all the ringing and rowing in the world would bring forth Madame again, though it might possibly

produce her avenging spouse. André shouldered his baggage and we began to retrace our steps.

"Back to the hotel," commanded H. C.; "they must put us up somewhere."

"Not a hole or corner unoccupied," groaned André. "You can't sleep in the bread oven. And they will all have gone to bed by the time we get back again."

Suddenly he halted before a house at the corner of the market-place. It looked little better than a common cabaret, and was also closed and dark. Down went the luggage, as he knocked mysteriously at the shutters.

"What are you doing?" we said. "You don't suppose that we would put up here even for an hour."

"It is clean and respectable," objected André. "Messieurs cannot walk the streets till morning."

A door was as mysteriously opened, leading into a room. A couple of candles were burning at a table, round which some rough-looking men were seated, drinking and playing cards, but keeping silence. It looked suspicious and uninviting.

"In fact we might be murdered here," shuddered H. C.: "most certainly we should be robbed."

André made his request: could they give us lodgment?

"Not so much as a chair or a bench," answered the woman, to our relief; for though we should never have entered, André might have disappeared with the baggage and given us some trouble. He evidently had all the obstinacy of the Breton about him, and was growing desperate. The door was closed again without ceremony, and once more we were left to make the best of it.

This time we took the lead and made for the hotel. Again we passed through the wonderful street with the overhanging eaves and gables. Again we paused and lingered, lost in admiration. But the light had departed from the latticed window, and no doubt in dreams the Fair One was beholding again the vision of H. C.

A few minutes more and we stood before the hotel. They were just closing the doors. Monsieur Hellard was crossing the passage at the moment. Never shall I forget his consternation. He raised his hands, and his hair stood on end.

"What's the matter?" he cried.

"Matter enough," replied André taking up the parable. "Madame never sent to the bouchère, and the bouchère has no room. And I think"—despair giving him courage—"it was too bad to give us a wild goose chase at this time of night."

"And now you must do your best and put us where you can," I concluded. "We are too tired to stir another step."

"I haven't where to lodge a cat," returned the perplexed landlord. "I cannot do impossibilities. What on earth are we to manufacture?"

"You have a salon?"

"Comme de juste!"

"Is it occupied?"

"No; but there are no beds there. It stands to reason."

"Then put down two mattresses on the floor, and we will make the best of them for to-night. And the sooner you allow us to repose our weary heads, the more grateful we shall be. It is nearly one o'clock."

Monsieur seemed convinced, and gave the word of command which sent two or three waiters flying. Poor André was one of them; but we soon discovered that he was the most willing and obliging man in the world.

Even now everything was mismanaged and had to be done over again; a wordy war ensued between landlord, waiters and chambermaids, each one having an original idea for our comfort and wanting their own way. The small Bedlam that went on would have been diverting at any other time. It was very nearly two o'clock before we closed the door upon the world, and felt that something like peace and repose lay before us.

The room was not uncomfortable. It had all the stiff luxuriance of a French salon, and a gilt clock on the mantelpiece ticked loudly and rang out the hours—too many of which, alas, we heard. On the table were the remains of a dessert, evidently hastily brought in from the table d'hôte room, which communicated with this by folding doors: dishes of biscuits, raisins and luscious grapes.

"At least we can refresh ourselves," sighed H. C., taking up a fine bunch and offering me another. "Nectar in its primitive state; the drink of the gods."

"And of Poets," I added.

"Talk not of poetry," he cried. "I feel that my vein has evaporated, and after to-night will never return."

Very soon, you may be sure, the room was in darkness and repose.

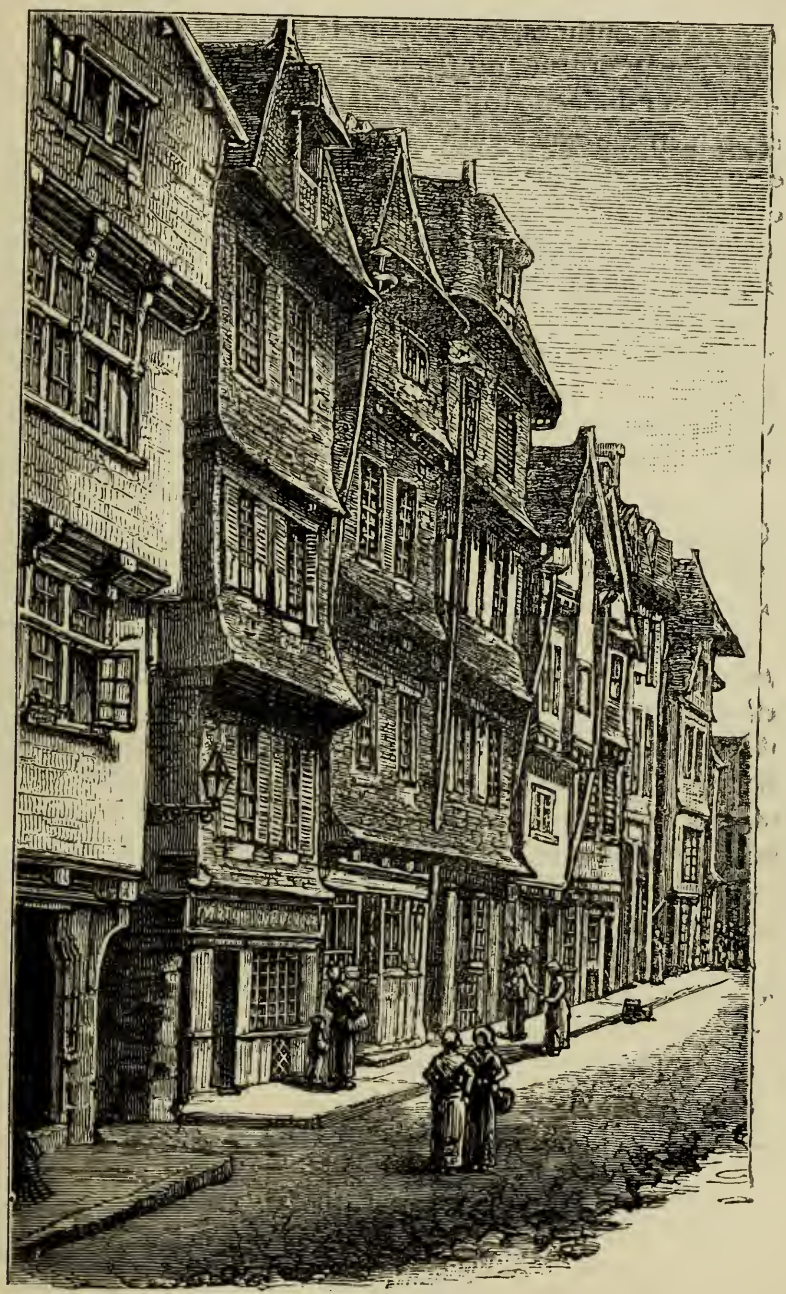
"The inequalities of the earth's surface are nothing to my bed," groaned H. C. as he laid himself down. "It is all hills and valleys. I think they must have put the mattress upon all the brooms and brushes of the hotel, crossed by all the fire-irons. And that wretched clock ticks on my brain like a sledge-hammer. I shall not be alive by morning."

"Have you made your will?"

"Yes," he replied; "and left you my museum, my shooting-box, all my unpublished MSS. and the care of my æsthetic aunt, Lady Maria. You will not find her troublesome; she lives on crystallised violets and barley water."

"Mixed blessings," I thought, but was too polite to say so. It must have been my last thought, for I remembered no more until the clock awoke me, striking four; and woke me again, striking six; after which sleep finally fled.

Soon the town also awoke; doors slammed and echoed; omnibuses and other vehicles rattled over the stones; voices seemed to fill the air; the streets echoed with foot-passengers. The sun was



MARKET PLACE, MORLAIX.

shining gloriously and we threw open the windows to the new day and the fresh breeze, and took our first look at Morlaix by daylight. Already we felt braced and exhilarated as we took in deep draughts of oxygen.

It was a lively scene. The Square close by was surrounded by gabled houses, and houses not gabled: a mixture of Ancient and Modern. That it should be all old was too much to expect, excepting from such sleepy old towns as Vitré or Nuremberg, where you have unbroken outlines, a mediæval picture unspoilt by modern barbarities; may dream and fancy yourself far back in the ages, and find it difficult indeed to realise that you are really not in the fifteenth but in the nineteenth century.

The streets were already beginning to be gay and animated; there was a look of expectancy and mild excitement on many faces, announcing that something unusual was going on. It was fair time and fête time; and even these stolid, sober people were stirred into something like laughter and enjoyment. Fair Normandy has a good deal of the vivacity of the French; but Graver Brittany, like England, loves to take its pleasures somewhat sadly.

It was a lovely morning. Before us, and beyond the square, stretched the heights of Morlaix, green and fertile, fruit and flower-laden. To our left towered the great viaduct, over which the train rolls, depositing its passengers far, far above the tops of the houses, far above the tallest steeple. It was a very striking picture,and H. C. shouted for joy and felt the muse rekindling within him. Upon all shone the glorious sun, above all was the glorious sky, blue, liquid and almost tangible, as only foreign skies can be. The fatigues of yesterday, the terrible adventures of the past night, all were forgotten. Nay, that midnight expedition was remembered with intense pleasure. All that was uncomfortable about it had evaporated; nothing remained but a vision wonderfully unusual, weird, picturesque: grand old-world outlines standing out in the surrounding darkness; a small procession of three; a flickering candle throwing out ghostly lights and shadows; a willing but unhappy waiter dying of exhaustion and pain; a curious figure of Misery in which there certainly was nothing picturesque, but much to arouse one's pity and sympathy—the better, diviner part of one's nature.

"Hurrah for a new day!" cried H. C., turning from the window and hastening to beautify and adorn. "New scenes, new people, new impressions! Oh, this glorious world! the delight of living!"

WHO WAS THE THIRD MAID?

IT was on a wild October evening about a year ago that my wife and I arrived by train at a well-known watering-place in the North of England. The wind was howling and roaring with delight at its resistless power; the rain came hissing down in large drops.

On yonder headland doubtless might be heard "The Whistling Woman"—dread harbinger of death and disaster to the mariner. The gale had been hourly increasing in violence, till for the last hour before arriving at our destination we had momentarily expected that the train would be blown from the track. Our hotel was situated on an eminence overlooking the town; and as we slowly ascended to it in our cab we thought: "Well, we must not be surprised to find our intended abode for the night has vanished."

However, presently we stopped in front of a building which looked substantial enough to withstand anything; and in answer to our driver's application to the bell, the door was promptly opened by a smartly-attired porter. He was closely followed by a person full of smiles and bows, who posted himself in the doorway ready to receive us.

All at once there was a terrific bang, as though a forty-pounder had been fired to welcome our arrival; and he of the smiles and bows was hurled headlong against the muddy wheel of our conveyance by the slamming-to of the large door. My wife's bonnet blew off and tugged hard at its moorings; the light in the porch was extinguished; while the wind seemed to give a shriek of triumph at the jokes he was playing upon us. Here we were, then, in total darkness and exposed to the drenching rain. However, half-an-hour afterwards all our discomforts were forgotten as we sat down to an excellent dinner à la carte.

Next morning I was abroad very early, looking for lodgings. Fortune seemed to smile upon me on this occasion; for scarcely had I proceeded fifty yards from my hotel when I came upon a very nice-looking row of houses, and in the window of the first was "Lodgings to let." Knocking at the door, it was soon opened by a very neat-looking maid.

I inquired if I could see the proprietor, but was told that Miss G. was not yet down. I said I would wait; and was shown into a very comfortably-furnished dining-room. Soon Miss G. appeared, and proved to be a pretty brunette of about five-and-twenty, whose dark eyes during our short interview were every now and then fixed on me with an intentness that seemed to be trying to read what kind of person I was; whilst her manner, though decidedly pleasing, had a certain restlessness in it which I could not help observing. Her

father and mother being both dead, she kept the lodging-house herself. I asked her if she had a good cook, to which she replied that she was responsible for most of that difficult part of the ménage herself, keeping two maids to assist in the house and parlour work. She went on to say that her drawing-room was "dissected:" a term common amongst north country lodging-house keepers, and meant to express that it was undergoing its autumn cleaning, but she would have it put straight if I wished. I told her that we should be quite contented with the dining-room, provided we had a good bed-room. This she at once showed me, and, soon coming to terms, I returned to the hotel.

After breakfast, I went to the bureau to ask for my account. Whilst it was being made out, I observed casually that I had taken lodgings at Miss G.'s on Cliff Terrace, upon which the accountant looked quickly up and said: "Oh, Miss G.'s," and then as quickly went on with my bill. I hardly noticed this at the moment, though I thought of it afterwards.

Eleven o'clock saw us comfortably ensconced in our rooms. After lunch, we took a delightful expedition, the weather having greatly moderated. We found that night, at dinner, that Miss G. was a first-rate cook, and we retired to rest much pleased with our quarters.

We soon made the acquaintance of the two maids, Jane, who waited upon us, and Mary, the housemaid; and two very pleasant and obliging young women we found them.

About the third morning of our stay, on going up to my bed-room after breakfast, I was surprised to find a strange maid in the room. She was standing by the bed, smoothing down the bed-clothes with both hands and appeared to take no notice of me, but continued gazing steadily in front of her, while her hands went mechanically on smoothing the clothes. I could not help being struck with her pale face, which wore a look of pain, and the fixed and almost stony expression of her eyes. I left her in exactly the same position as I found her. On coming down I said to my wife: "I did not know Miss G. employed three servants. There certainly is another making the bed in our room." I am short-sighted, and my wife would have it I had made a mistake; but I felt quite certain I had not. Later on, whilst Jane was laying the lunch, I said to her: "I thought that you and Mary were the only two servants in the house."

"Yes, sir, only me and Mary," was Jane's reply, as she left the room.

"There," said my wife, "I told you that you were mistaken." And I did not pursue the subject further.

Two or three days slipped away in pleasant occupations, such as driving, boating, etc., and we had forgotten all about the third maid. We saw but little of Miss G., though her handiwork was pleasantly apparent in the cuisine.

On the sixth morning of our stay, which was the day before

we were to leave, my wife after breakfast said she would go up and do a little packing whilst I made out our route for the following day in the Bradshaw; but was soon interrupted by the return of my wife with a rather scared look on her face.

"Well," she said, "you were right after all, for there is another maid, and she is now in our bed-room, and apparently engaged in much the same occupation as when you saw her there. She took no notice of me, but stood there with her body slightly bent over the bed, looking straight in front of her, her hands smoothing the bed-clothes." She described her as having dark hair, her face very pale, and her mouth very firmly set. My curiosity was now so much awakened that I determined to question Miss G. on the subject. But our carriage was now at the door waiting for us to start on an expedition that would engage us all day.

On my return, late in the afternoon, meeting Miss G. in the passage, I said to her: "Who is the third servant that Mrs. K. and myself have seen once or twice in our bed-room?"

Miss G. looked, I thought, rather scared, and, murmuring something that I could not catch, turned and went hurriedly down the stairs into the kitchen.

An hour afterwards, as we were sitting waiting for our dinner, Jane brought a note from Miss G. enclosing her account, and saying that she had just had a telegram summoning her to the sick-bed of a relation, that in all probability she would not be back till after our departure, but that she had left directions with the servants, and hoped they would make us quite comfortable, and that we would excuse her hurried departure.

A few minutes after, a cab drove up to the door, into which, from our window, we saw Miss G. get, and drive rapidly away.

Later on in the evening, whilst Jane was clearing away the dinner things, I said to her: "By-the-by, Jane, who is the third maid?" She was just going to leave the room as I spoke; instead of replying she turned round with such a scared look on her face that I felt quite alarmed, then, hurriedly catching up her tray, she left the room. Thinking that further inquiry would be very disagreeable to her, I forbore again mentioning the subject. Next day, our week being up, we departed for fresh woods and pastures new.

Our tour led us considerably further north, but a month later saw us homeward bound. The nearest route by rail led us by X. As we drew up at the station we noticed on the platform a parson, in whom we recognised one of the clergy of X., whose church we had been to. Presently the door of our compartment was opened and he put in a lady, wished her good-bye, the guard's whistle blew and we were off. After a short time we fell into conversation with the lady and found her to be the clergyman's wife. Amongst other things, we asked after Miss G.

"Oh, Miss G.," she replied; "she is very well, but I hear, poor thing, she has not had a very good season."

"I am sorry to hear that," I replied; "why is it?" She was silent for a minute and then related to us the following facts.

At the beginning of the season a rather untoward event occurred at Miss G.'s lodgings. An elderly lady took one of the flats for a month. She had with her an attendant of about thirty. Before long Miss G. observed that they were not on very good terms, and one morning the old lady was found dead in her bed.

A doctor was at once called in, who, on viewing the body, found there were very suspicious marks round the neck and throat, as if a person's fingers had been tightly pressed upon them. The maid on hearing this at once became very restless, and going to her bed-room, which was at the top of the house, packed a small bag and, having put on her things, was about to descend the stairs when, from hurry or agitation, she missed her footing and, falling to the bottom, broke her neck.

But not the least extraordinary part of the business was that not the slightest clue could be obtained as to who the lady was, the linen of herself and her maid having only initials marked on it. The police did their best by advertising and inquiry, but all they could find out was that they had come straight to X. from Liverpool, where they had arrived from America. There they were traced to Fifth Avenue Hotel, in New York, where they had been only known by the number of their room, and to which they had come from no one knew whither. Enough money was found in the lady's box to pay the expenses of their funerals. An open verdict was returned at the inquests which were held. The police took possession of their belongings and had them, no doubt, at the present moment.

At this point the train stopped, the lady wished us "Good-morning" and left the carriage; and we, as we steamed south, were left to meditate on this strange but perfectly true story and to solve as we best could the still unanswered question of "Who was the third maid?"

A MODERN WITCH.

I.

NEVER shall I forget my first meeting with Irene Latouche. After travelling all day, I had arrived at my friend Maitland's house to find that dinner had been over for at least an hour. Having taken the precaution of dining during the journey this did not affect me very materially; but my kindly host, who met me in the hall, took it very much to heart.

"We quite gave you up, my dear fellow, we did indeed," he reiterated, grasping my hand with additional fervour each time he made the assertion. "My wife will be so vexed at your missing dinner. You are sure you won't have a bit now? Such a haunch of venison, hung to a turn! One of old Ward's. You know he has taken Glen Bogie this season, and is having rare sport, I am told. Ah, well, if you really won't take anything, we had better join the ladies in the drawing-room."

"But the luggage hasn't come from the station yet," I interposed, "and my dress clothes are in my portmanteau——"

"Nonsense about dress clothes! It will be bed-time soon. You don't suppose anybody cares what you have on, do you?"

With this comforting assurance, Maitland pushed open the drawing-room door, and a flood of light streamed out into the hall. Dazzled by the sudden glare I stepped back, but not before I had caught sight of a most striking figure at the further end of the long room.

"Who on earth is that girl?" I whispered.

"Which? Oh, the one playing the harp, you mean? I might have known that! A rare beauty, isn't she? I thought you would find her out pretty soon!"

Now I am a middle-aged bachelor of quiet tastes, and nothing annoys me more than when my friends poke ponderous fun at me in this fashion. So, ignoring Maitland's facetious suggestion, I calmly walked forward and shook hands with my hostess. She greeted me with her customary cordiality, and in about two minutes I was feeling perfectly at home in spite of my dusty clothes. I now had an opportunity of examining the other guests, who were dispersed in groups about the room. Most of them were people I had frequently met before under the Maitlands' hospitable roof, but the face which had first arrested my attention was that of an absolute stranger.

"I see you are admiring Miss Latouche, like the rest of us," said Mrs. Maitland in a low voice. "Such a talented girl! She can play positively any kind of instrument, and has persuaded me to have the old harp taken out of the lumber-room and put in order for her.

She looks so well playing it, doesn't she? Quite like Cleopatra or the Queen of Sheba!"

"She is undoubtedly handsome in a certain style," I replied cautiously. "I don't know whether I admire such a gipsy type myself——"

"Ah, you agree with me then," interrupted my hostess eagerly. "I call it an uncomfortable sort of beauty for a drawing-room. She always looks as if she might produce a dagger at a moment's notice, as the people do in operas. Give me a nice simple girl with a pretty English face, like my niece Lily Wallace over there! But I am bound to say Miss Latouche makes a great sensation wherever she goes. Of course she has wonderful powers."

I was about to inquire in what these powers consisted, when Mrs. Maitland was called away. Left to myself, I could not repress a smile at the comparison she had instituted between her own niece and the beautiful stranger. Lily was well enough, a good-tempered pink and white girl, who in twenty years' time would develop into just such another florid matron as her aunt. And then I looked again at Miss Latouche.

She was seated a little apart from the rest, one white arm hanging listlessly over the harp upon which she had just been playing. Her large dark eyes had a far-away look of utter abstraction from all sublunary matters that I have never seen in anyone besides. Masses of wavy black hair were loosely coiled over her head, round a high Spanish comb, and half concealed her brow in a dusky cloud. At first sight the black velvet dress, which swept around her in heavy folds, seemed rather an unsuitable costume for so young a girl. But its sombreness was relieved by a gorgeous Indian scarf, thrown carelessly over the shoulders. I do not know who was responsible for Miss Latouche's get-up, or if she really required an extra wrap. At any rate, the combination of colours was very effective.

Whilst I was speculating vaguely on the probable character of this striking young lady, she slowly rose from her low seat and crossed the room. Her eyes were wide open, but apparently fixed on space, and she moved with the slow, mechanical motion of a sleepwalker. To my intense surprise she came straight towards me, and stood in an expectant attitude about a yard from where I was sitting. Not knowing exactly how to receive this advance, I jumped up and offered her my chair. She waved it aside with a gesture of imperial scorn. Her dark eyes positively flashed fire, and a rich glow flushed her pale olive cheek. I could see that I had deeply offended her.

"I must apologise," I began nervously, "but I thought you might be tired."

Before the words were fairly spoken, I realised the full imbecility of this remark. My only excuse for making such a fatuous observation was that the near vicinity of this weird beauty had paralysed

my reasoning faculties, so that I hardly knew what I was saying. And then she spoke in a low, rich voice which thrilled me through every nerve. I could not understand the meaning of her words, or even recognise the language in which they were spoken. But the tone of her voice was unutterably sad, like an inarticulate wail of despair. All the time her glorious eyes were resting on me as if she would read my inmost thoughts, whilst I responded with an idiotic smile of embarrassment. Even now, after the lapse of years, it makes me hot all over to think of that moment.

I don't know how long I had been standing looking like a fool, when Miss Latouche turned away as abruptly as she had approached and walked straight to the door. With a sigh of relief I sank down on the despised chair. After a few moments I gained sufficient courage to glance round and assure myself that no spectators had witnessed my discomfiture. It was a great relief to find that the entire party had migrated to the further end of the room, where a funny little man was singing comic songs with a banjo accompaniment. I slipped in next my host, who was thoroughly enjoying the performance.

"Encore! Capital! Give us some more of it, Tommy," he roared when the song came to an end. "That's my sort of music, isn't it yours, Carew?" he added, turning to me.

"A very clever performance," I answered stiffly, divided between my natural abhorrence of comic songs and the difficulty of making a candid reply in the immediate vicinity of the funny man.

"Just so. That's what I call really clever," said Maitland, not perceiving my lack of enthusiasm. "Worth a dozen of those melancholy tunes on the harp, in my opinion. By-the-bye, what's become of Miss Latouche? Couldn't stand this sort of thing, I suppose. Too merry for her. What a pity such a handsome girl should mope so."

"Miss Latouche appears to be rather eccentric," I interposed. "Something of a genius, I imagine?"

"So they all say. Well, she is a clever girl, certainly—only—but you will soon find out what she is like. Here's Tommy going to give us that capital song about the bad cigar. Ever heard it? No? Ha! ha! It will make you laugh then."

That is just what I hate about a comic performance. One laughs under compulsion. If one is sufficiently independent to resist, one incurs the suspicion of being wanting in humour and some well-meaning friend feels bound to explain the joke until one forces a little hollow mirth. Directly the song was in full swing, and the audience convulsed with merriment, I seized my opportunity and fled from the drawing-room. In the library I knew by experience that I should find a good fire and a comfortable arm-chair, both of which would be acceptable after my long journey. It was separated from the rest of the house by a heavy baize door and a long pass-

age, so that I was not likely to be disturbed by any stray revellers. Several years' experience of the comforts of a bachelor establishment has given me a great taste for my own society, and it was with unfeigned delight that I looked forward to a quiet half-hour in this haven of refuge.

"Bother Maitland! Why doesn't he have the house better warmed and lighted," I muttered, as the baize door swung behind me, and the sudden draught extinguished my candle. I would not go back to relight it for fear of encountering some officious friend in the hall, who would insist upon accompanying me into my retreat. I preferred groping my way down the long corridor, which was in darkness except for a bright streak of moonlight that streamed in through a window at the further end. I had just decided that it was my plain duty to give Maitland the address of a good shop where he could not only procure cheap lamps but also very serviceable stoves for warming passages, at a moderate price, when I discovered that the said window was open.

"Too bad of the servants," I thought; "I should discharge them all if they were mine. It quite accounts for the howling draught through the house. Just the thing to give one rheumatism at this time of year."

Advancing with the intention of excluding the chilly blast, I was suddenly arrested by the sight of a motionless figure kneeling in front of the window. It was Irene Latouche. I had not noticed her in the confusing patch of moonlight until my foot was almost on the heavy velvet dress which fell over the floor like a great dark pall. Her arms were resting on the window-sill, her beautiful pale face gazing upwards with an expression of agonised despair. Evidently she was quite unconscious of my presence.

Whilst I was turning over in my mind the possibility of beating a silent retreat, she gave a low groan, so full of unquenchable pain that my blood fairly ran cold. Then rising to her feet, she leaned far out into the chill night air, stretching her white arms up towards the stars with a passionate action of entreaty.

"Oh, my Beloved! Shall I ever pray in vain? Is there no mercy?" she cried, and the sound of her voice was like the wind moaning through rocky caverns. "My heart is breaking! My strength is almost at an end! How much longer must I suffer this unspeakable misery?"

Clearly this sort of thing was not intended for strangers. I stopped my ears and shrank as closely as I could into the shadow of the wall. But I could not take my eyes off the girl for a moment. Such an exhibition of wild passion I have never witnessed before or since. As a dramatic effort it was superb; but all the time I was distinctly conscious of the absurd figure I should cut if any third person came on the scene. Also certain warning twinges in my left shoulder reminded me that I was not in the habit of standing by open windows on

bleak autumn nights. Why Miss Latouche did not catch her death of cold I cannot imagine; for I could see the wind disordering her dark masses of hair and blowing back the Indian scarf from her bare shoulders. But she appeared to be as indifferent to personal discomfort as she was to all external sounds.

Just as I had settled that my health would never survive such a wanton infringement of all sanitary laws, Irene again sank on her knees and buried her face in her hands. Now was my time. I crept noiselessly back up the corridor until my hand was actually on the baize door. Then excitement got the better of prudence; and, tearing it open, I rushed wildly across the hall and up the staircase, never pausing until I was safe in my own room, with the door locked behind me and the unlighted bed-room candle still clutched firmly in my hand.

II.

Now, having already mentioned that I am a person of regular and strictly conventional habits, it will be readily believed that I viewed these extraordinary proceedings with unmitigated disgust. It was not to encounter horrid experiences like this that I had left my comfortable town house, where draughts and midnight adventures were alike unknown. Before I came down to breakfast on the following morning, I had fabricated a long story about pressing business which necessitated my immediate return to town. Though ordinarily of a truthful disposition, I was prepared to solemnly aver that the success of an important lawsuit depended on my presence in London within the next twelve hours. I did not even shrink from the prospect of having to produce circumstantial evidence to convince Maitland of the truth of my assertion. Anything rather than undergo any further shocks to my nervous system.

Happily I was spared the necessity of perjuring myself to this extent. When the breakfast bell rang, I descended and found that as usual very few of the guests, had obeyed the summons. Mrs. Maitland was pouring out tea quite undisturbed by this irregularity, for Longacres is a house where attendance at the meals is never compulsory.

"And how have you slept?" she said, extending me a plump hand glittering with rings. "We were afraid that perhaps you were a little overtired last night, as you went off to bed in the middle of the singing. Capital, wasn't it? Mr. Tucker is so very funny, and never in the least vulgar with his jokes! Now some comic singers really forget that there are girls in the room.—(Lily, my love, just go and see if your uncle is coming down).—I assure you, Mr. Carew, I was staying in a country house last year—mind, I give no names—where the songs were only fit for a music-hall! It's perfectly true; even George said it made him feel quite red to hear such things in a drawing-

room. But, as I was saying, Mr. Tucker is so different; such genuine humour, you know!"

It is impossible to conjecture how long my amiable hostess might have rippled on in this strain if our conversation had not been interrupted by the entry of Miss Latouche.

"You have been introduced?" whispered Mrs. Maitland; and, without waiting for an answer, she called out merrily: "My dear Irene, you must positively come and entertain Mr. Carew. He will give up early rising if he finds that it is always to mean a tête-à-tête with an old woman!"

To my intense astonishment, Miss Latouche replied in the same jesting tone, and taking the vacant seat next mine began at once to talk in the most friendly way imaginable. Not a trace of eccentricity was perceptible in her manner. She was merely a handsome girl, with a strong vein of originality. I began to doubt the evidence of my senses. Surely I must have been labouring under some hallucination the previous night. It was almost easier to believe that I had been the dupe of a portentous nightmare than that this charming girl should have enacted such a strange part.

Before the end of breakfast I was certain that I had taken a very exaggerated view of the situation. It would be a pity to cut short a pleasant visit and risk offending some of my oldest friends on such purely fanciful grounds. Besides, I just remembered that I had given my cook a holiday and that if I went home I should be dependent on the culinary skill of a charwoman. This last consideration determined me. I settled to stay.

Nothing in Miss Latouche's behaviour led me to regret my decision. On the contrary, at the end of a few days we were firm friends. The better I knew her the greater became my admiration of her beauty and talents; and, without vanity, I think I may say that she distinctly preferred me to the other guests, who were mostly very ordinary types of modern young men. The extraordinary impressions of the first evening had entirely faded from my mind, when they were suddenly revived in all their intensity by the following incident.

It was a wet morning and we were all lolling about the billiard-room in various stages of boredom. Some of the more energetic members of the party had been out at dawn, cub hunting, and had returned wet through just as we finished breakfast, in time to add their little quota of grumbling to the general bulk of discontent. Mrs. Maitland, after making a fruitless attempt to rally the spirits of the party, gave up the effort in despair and retired to write letters in her room. Conversation was carried on in fits and starts, whilst from time to time people knocked about the billiard balls in a desultory fashion without exhibiting even a show of interest in the result of the game.

At last someone introduced the subject of fortune-telling. Instantly

there was a revival of interest. Everybody had some scrap of experience to contribute, or some marvellous story to relate. Only Miss Latouche remained silent.

"What a pity none of us can tell fortunes!" cried Lily Wallace, eagerly. "Won't anybody try? It's such fun, almost as amusing as turning tables, and it often comes true in the most wonderful way!"

"Ah, it does indeed!" sighed Mr. Tucker, with a countenance of preternatural gravity. "A poor fellow I know was told that he would marry and then die. Well, it's all coming true!"

"Indeed! Really! How very shocking!"

"Yes, indeed! Poor chap! He married last year and now he has nothing but death before him!"

"How awfully sad!" exclaimed Lily, sympathetically. "Why, you are smiling! Oh, you bad man. I do believe you were only laughing at me after all! Now, Irene, will you please tell Mr. Tucker's fortune, and show him that it is no joking matter? I am sure you know the way, because I have seen a mysterious book about palmistry in your room. Now do, there's a dear girl."

After a little more pressing, Miss Latouche acceded to the general request that she would show her skill. Several people pressed forward at once to have their fortunes told, the men being quite as eager as the girls, although they affected to laugh at the whole affair. I watched the exhibition with some interest. Surely here would be a fair field for the exercise of that wonderful dramatic power which I knew Miss Latouche held in reserve. Well, I was disappointed. She examined the hands submitted to her notice, and interpreted the lines with an amount of conscientious commonplaceness for which I should never have given her credit. The majority of the fortunes were composed of the conventional mixture of illnesses and love affairs which is the stock-in-trade of drawing-room magicians. I glanced at her face. Not a trace of enthusiasm was visible. She was telling fortunes as mechanically as a cottager knits stockings.

"Now we have all been done except Mr. Carew! It's his turn!" cried Lily, who was enjoying the whole thing immensely. "He must have his fortune told! You will do him next, won't you, Irene?"

"Never!"

"Oh, why not? Are you tired? What a pity!"

Miss Latouche took not the slightest notice of the chorus of protestations. She merely turned away with such an air of inflexible determination that even the ardent Lily refrained from pressing her any further.

My curiosity was considerably excited by finding myself an exception to the general rule. Was the inference to be drawn from Miss Latouche's behaviour flattering, or the reverse? I had no chance of finding out until late in the afternoon, when the rain ceased and we all gladly seized the opportunity of getting some exercise before dinner.

The different members of the party quickly dispersed in opposite directions. A few exceptionally active young people tried to make up for lost time by starting a game of tennis on the cinder courts. Some diverged towards the stables, others took a brisk constitutional up and down the gravel path. Under the pretence of lighting a cigar, I contrived to wait about near the door until I saw Miss Latouche crossing the hall. I remember thinking how wonderfully handsome she looked as she came forward with a crimson shawl thrown over her head—for it was one of her peculiarities never to wear a conventional hat or bonnet unless absolutely obliged.

"What do you say to going up the hill on the chance of seeing a fine sunset?" I said, as she joined me. She nodded assent, and turning away from the others, we began to climb a winding path, from the top of which there was supposed to be a wonderful view. When we had gone about a quarter of a mile, we stopped and looked round. Far out in front stretched a beautiful valley lighted by gleams of fitful sunshine. The house and garden lay at our feet, but so far below that we only occasionally heard a faint echo from the tennis courts. The moment seemed propitious.

"Miss Latouche," I said abruptly, "I want to ask you something."

No sooner were the words spoken than it struck me they were liable to be misunderstood. She might imagine that I intended to make her an offer, and accept me on the spot. Infinitely as I admired her in an abstract fashion, I had never contemplated matrimony for a moment. Visions of enraged male relatives armed with horse-whips, followed by a formidable breach of promise case, flitted through my mind. There was no time to be lost.

"It's only about the fortune-telling," I stammered out; "nothing else, I assure you—nothing at all!"

"I knew it," replied Miss Latouche calmly and without a trace of embarrassment.

Sensible girl! I breathed freely once more and proceeded with my investigations.

"Why wouldn't you tell my fortune this morning? Why am I alone excluded?"

"Do you really wish to know?" she said very quietly.

"Of course, or I shouldn't ask!"

"Well then, the reason that I declined to tamper with *your* destiny is that I should be irresistibly compelled to tell *you* the truth!"

"Are you serious, or only ——?"

"Am I serious?" she cried, with a wild laugh; "*you* ask this? The time has at last come for an explanation. I would willingly have spared you, but it is in vain that we seek to avoid our fate! Rest here!" and seizing my wrist, she dragged me down on the fallen trunk of a tree that lay half hidden by the tall grass at the side of the path. Immediately behind us was a gloomy wood, choked

with rank autumnal growths. A more dank, unwholesome situation for a seat on a wet day it would be impossible to conceive. But I preferred running the risk of rheumatic fever to contradicting Miss Latouche in her present mood. Only I hoped the explanation would be exceedingly brief.

"You pretend that you never saw me before the other evening?" she began, feverishly.

"Certainly!" I answered, with great astonishment. "It was undoubtedly our first meeting. I am sure ——"

"Can you swear it?" she interrupted, eagerly.

"Oh, no! I never swear! But I don't mind affirming," I said playfully, hoping to give a less serious turn to the conversation.

To my horror Miss Latouche wrung her hands with the same expression of hopeless suffering that I had seen once before.

"It is too cruel," she moaned, "after all this dreary waiting and watching, to be met like this! Oh, my Beloved! I cannot bear it any longer! Shall I never find you? Never! never!"

Her voice died away with a sob of despair, which effectually quenched my capacity for making jokes.

"I hardly understand what you are alluding to," I said as nicely as I could; "but if you will trust me, I promise to do anything that lies in my power to help you."

"You promise!" she exclaimed, eagerly. "Mind, you are bound now! Bound to my service!"

This was taking my polite offer of assistance rather more seriously than I intended. Muttering some commonplace compliment, I begged to be further enlightened.

"You will not repeat to any living soul the mysteries I am about to disclose?" she began. "No, I need not ask! There is already sufficient sympathy between us for me to be sure of your discretion. But remember, if you ever feel tempted to disclose a single word of these hidden matters, there are Unseen Powers who will amply avenge the profanation. Know, then, that since my Beloved was snatched from me by what dull men call death, all my faculties have been concentrated on the effort to discover some link of communication with the Invisible World. I will not dwell on my toils and sufferings, the terrible sights I have braved and the sleepless nights that I have sacrificed to study. I do not grudge my youth, passed as it were under the shadow of the tomb, for at last the truth has been revealed to me. *You* are to be the medium!"

"Oh, nonsense!" I shouted. "I won't undertake it! Nothing shall persuade me! Besides, I am perfectly ignorant of the subject."

"You underrate your powers," observed Miss Latouche with calm conviction. "Nature has endowed you with a most unusual organisation. Your powers are quite involuntary. Nothing you say or do can make the slightest difference. You are merely a passive agent for the transmission of electric force."

"Do you mean a sort of telegraph wire?" I gasped, feebly.

"If you offer no resistance, all will be well with us," continued Miss Latouche, ignoring the interruption; "but the Unseen Powers will bear no trifling, and I can summon those to my aid who will make you bitterly repent any levity!"

I hate those sort of vague prophecies. They frighten one quite out of proportion to their real gravity.

"By the bye, I don't yet understand the reason you wouldn't tell my fortune, as you seem to know such a lot about those things," I said at last.

"What! You do not understand yet that there is a bond between us which makes any concealment impossible? I could not blind *you* with the paltry fictions that satisfy those poor fools!" and she waved her hand contemptuously towards the distant figures of the tennis players, amongst whom Mr. Tucker, in a wonderful costume, was distinctly visible. The expression struck me as unjustifiably strong, even when applied to a man who sang comic songs with a banjo accompaniment.

"I don't think he is a bad little chap," I said, apologetically.

"They are all alike," she replied, with an air of ineffable scorn. "You can only content them with idle promises of love and wealth, like the ignorant village girl who crosses a gipsy's hand with silver and in return is promised a rich husband. And all the while I see the dark cloud hanging over them and can do nothing to avert it. Ah! it is terrible to know the evil to come and be powerless to warn others! To be obliged to smile whilst one's heart is wrung with anguish and one's brain tortured with nameless apprehensions; that is indeed misery!"

"Dear me!" I said, nervously; "I hope you don't foresee any catastrophe about to overwhelm *me?*"

She gazed straight into my eyes, and her passionate face gradually softened into a lovely smile.

"No, my only friend!" she exclaimed, taking my hand gently in hers; "so far, no cloud darkens the perfect happiness of our intercourse!"

I felt that there were moments of compensation even in the pursuit of the Black Arts!

III.

It was a curious sensation, mixing again with the commonplace pleasure-seekers at Longacres, conscious that I was the repository of such extraordinary revelations. For, before we left our damp retreat, Irene had confided in me the secret history of her life. Not that I understood it very clearly, owing to her voice being continually choked by stifled emotion. But I gathered that a person, presumably of the male sex, who was vaguely designated as the Beloved, had

perished in some frightful manner before her eyes, and ever since that time she had devoted herself to the study of the occult sciences in the firm conviction that is was possible to discover a medium of communication with the Unseen World. She now persisted that I had been designated by unerring proofs as that medium. She assured me that, months previously, she had foreseen my arrival at Longacres in the precise fashion in which it really took place.

"Every detail," she said, "was exactly foreshadowed in the vision. Not only did I recognise you at once by your clothes (which were different from those of the other men present), but your voice seemed familiar to me, as if I had known you for years. I saw you gazing at me with what I fondly believed to be a look of mutual recognition. I remember rising from my seat in a species of ecstatic trance to which I am liable in moments of excitement. I have a faint recollection of addressing you with an impassioned appeal for help, to which you responded with icy indifference, but the rest of our interview remains a blank. Only there was a cruel sense of disappointment: instead of meeting as two spirits whose interests were inseparable, you denied any previous knowledge of me, and even manifested a sort of terrified aversion at my approach. I saw you shrink away from my side; then nothing remained for me but to temporarily dissemble my purpose and try first to win your confidence by the exercise of my poor woman's wits. In this at least I was successful!"

Irene only spoke the truth. She had completely subdued my will by her fascinations, and though I hated and, in private, ridiculed all supernatural dealings, I was prepared to try the wildest experiments at her bidding.

The trial of my obedience arrived sooner than I anticipated. Immediately after luncheon next day Irene made a sign to me to follow her into the garden.

"All is ready!" she exclaimed, with great excitement. "To-night will see us successful or for ever lost!"

"What do you mean?" I inquired, dubiously; for it did not sound a very cheery prospect.

"I mean that all things point to a hasty solution of the great problem. To-night the planets are propitious, and with your help the chain of communication will be at last complete. Oh, my Beloved! my toil and waiting has not been all in vain!"

"Well, what do you want me to do?" I said, rather sulkily. "Mind, it mustn't be this evening, because Mrs. Maitland has a lot of people coming to dinner, and we can't possibly leave the drawing-room."

"The crisis will be at midnight in the ruined chapel," observed Irene, as if she were stating the most ordinary fact; "but you must meet me an hour before to make all sure."

"Preposterous!" I exclaimed; "it's quite out of the question.

Wander about the garden at midnight indeed! What would people say if they saw us?"

"Do you imagine that I allow myself to be influenced by the opinion of poor-spirited fools?" inquired Irene with fine scorn. And then, suddenly changing her tactics, she sobbed and prayed me to grant her this one boon—it might be the last thing she would ever ask.

Well, she was very handsome, and I am but human. Before she left me I had promised to do what she wished.

It may be imagined that I passed a miserable day, distracted by a thousand gloomy apprehensions which increased as the fatal hour approached. I have mentioned that there was to be a dinner party that evening.

"A lot of country neighbours," as Maitland explained. "They like a big feed from time to time. I put out the old port and my wife wears her smartest dress and all the diamonds. It is quite a fuss to persuade her to put them on, she is so nervous about them being lost! She always insists on my locking them up in the safe again before I go to bed. Of course I don't contradict her, but half the time I leave them on my dressing-room table till next morning. Ha! ha! It is always best to humour ladies, even when they are a trifle unreasonable."

It is one of Maitland's little foibles that he never can resist drawing attention to the family diamonds (which are remarkably fine) by some passing allusion of this sort.

Nothing of any interest happened during dinner. When it was at last terminated we retired to the drawing-room, and listened with great decorum to several pieces of music. Miss Latouche was pressed to perform upon the harp, which she did with her usual melancholy grace. To-night she was in a rich white robe, which enhanced the peculiarly dusky effect of her olive skin and masses of dark hair. Her face was very pale; and, to my surprise, shortly after playing she complained of a bad headache and went off to bed. I hardly knew what to think. Had her courage failed her at the last, and, when it came to the point, did she shrink from braving the opinion of the world which she affected so thoroughly to despise?

"So, after all her boasting, she is no bolder than the rest of us!" I thought, with intense relief, as I wandered across the hall to join the other men in the smoking-room. The last guest had departed, and very soon the whole house would be at rest for the night. "How I shall laugh at her to-morrow!" I muttered. "Never again will she impose——"

My meditations were interrupted by an icy touch on my wrist. Turning, I saw Irene by my side, with a dark cloak thrown over her evening dress. Without speaking a word she drew me towards a side door into the garden, which was seldom used, and, producing a key from her pocket, opened it noiselessly.

"We can't go out at this time of night!" I gasped, making a faint effort to break loose. "I haven't even a hat! It's really past a joke!"

"Remember your promise!" she whispered, in a voice of such awful menace that, feeling all resistance was useless, I followed her out into the darkness. At that moment a sudden gust of wind slammed the door.

"*Now* what shall we do!" I exclaimed. "There is no handle and the key is inside!"

"Hush!" she whispered. "No more of these trivialities! I tell you the Spirits are abroad to-night; the air is thick with unseen forms. Obey me in silence, or you are lost."

Speechless with annoyance, my teeth chattering with cold and general creepiness, I followed her through the shrubberies until we reached the site of a ruined chapel, which had originally joined on to the old wing of the house. Of this building little remained except portions of the outer walls, overgrown with ivy. The pavement had long since disappeared, and was replaced by a rank growth of grass and weeds, amongst which lay scattered such monumental remains as had survived the general destruction. Only one window of the house happened to look out in this direction. I could see a light shining through the blind, and, with a touch, drew Irene's attention to it.

"Do not alarm yourself with vain fears," she whispered; "it is only Mr. Maitland's dressing-room. All will be quiet soon!" As she spoke, the light was suddenly extinguished.

Only then did I realise the full horrors of my position. When that bed-room candle went out, the last link which bound me to civilization seemed to have snapped. I was at the mercy of an enthusiast who had broken loose from all those conventional trammels which I hold in such respect. Although I had the greatest admiration for Irene, nothing would have surprised me less than if my murdered remains had been found next morning half hidden in the dank grass of the ruined chapel.

We were standing in the deep shadow of the old wall. The silence was intense. Indeed, after Irene's injunctions, I hardly dared breathe for fear of drawing down some misfortune on my devoted head. Not that I quite believed anything was going to happen, only it was best to be on the safe side. Suddenly the stillness was broken by the distant sound of the stable clock striking twelve.

"It has come!" whispered Irene, stooping towards me with an expression of the utmost anxiety. "Now you must obey me absolutely, or we shall both incur the wrath of the Unseen Powers. No wavering! We have gone too far to recede! First, to establish the electric current between us, you must hold me firmly by the wrist and pass your hand slowly up and down my arm, repeating these words after me."

I hesitated. The proceeding struck me as extraordinary.

"Will you imperil us both?" muttered Irene, in such a tone of agony that I seized her arm and began to rub for my life. I remember noticing that it was as cold and white as the arm of a marble statue. Meanwhile Irene repeated an invocation, apparently in the same language in which she had addressed me at our first meeting, and I imitated her to the best of my ability.

After this had been going on a few minutes, she inquired in a whisper if I felt anything unusual. I considered that my sensations were quite sufficiently peculiar to justify my replying in the affirmative. She appeared satisfied.

"All will be well, my friend," she murmured, sinking down with an air of exhaustion on the lid of an ancient stone coffin that lay half overgrown with ivy at our feet. "The danger will be averted if you act with courage; only keep your hold on my hand and the Unseen Influences have no power to hurt us! Now drink this." With these words she offered me a small bottle of a dull blue colour and very curious shape.

I examined the little flask suspiciously. I had a hazy impression that I had once seen something like it in the British Museum.

"Never can I reveal by what means I procured this invaluable treasure and the precious fluid that it contains," replied Irene in answer to my inquisitive glance. "Suffice it to say that for countless ages they lay concealed in the cerements of a mummy."

That settled me. I instantly resolved that no power on earth should induce me to taste the nasty mess. A bright thought occurred to me—I would base my refusal upon grounds which even Irene could scarcely combat.

"I am dreadfully sorry," I whispered, "but it upsets me to drink anything except water; in fact I can't do it, the consequences would be too horrible! I need not particularise, but literally I couldn't keep it down a minute. So it seems hardly worth while to risk wasting this valuable fluid."

"And am I to be baffled at this hour by Human Weakness!" cried Irene, stamping with suppressed rage. "It shall not be! Ha! I have it! The odour alone may be sufficiently powerful to work our purpose." And uncorking the bottle, she held it towards me.

The smell was pungent but not disagreeable.

"Now all is completed," she said, when I had inhaled a few whiffs. "You have only to gaze before you, and wish with all the force of your will that my Beloved may appear."

We stood perfectly still, hand clasped in hand. Irene had risen from her grim seat, and was leaning against me for support. Her cloak had fallen off, and I thought that she looked like a beautiful spirit herself against the dark background of ivy. In obedience to her orders, I fixed my eyes on space and tried to wish.

Hardly had I begun, when a figure emerged from behind the

opposite wall and glided slowly across the chapel towards us. I was so amazed that I could hardly believe the evidence of my senses. As for Irene, she only smiled with ineffable bliss, as if it were exactly what she had expected all along.

It was rather a cloudy night, so that I had great difficulty in following the movements of the mysterious figure. When it gained the centre of the chapel it paused, and then slowly turned towards the wall of the house. As far as I could see, it was making some wild motion with its upraised arms, whether of benediction or menace it was impossible to discern at that distance; but I could not shake off a horrid impression that it was cursing the slumbering inmates. And then, wonderful to relate, whilst my eyes were fixed upon the dark figure, it began slowly to rise into the air!

At this portentous sight, I don't mind confessing that my hair fairly bristled with horror. Fortunately for the preservation of my reason, at that instant the moon, gleaming from behind a cloud, revealed a long ladder planted against Mr. Maitland's dressing-room window.

In a moment I recovered my self-possession.

"Stay still—I am going to leave you for a short time," I whispered.

Irene clung to me with both hands, and expressed a fear that the outraged spirits would tear us in pieces if we moved.

"Bother the spirits!" I replied, in a gruff whisper. "I swear it will be the worse for you if you make a fuss now!"

She sobbed and wrung her hands, but the time was past for that to have any effect upon me, and, disengaging myself from her grasp, I crept away, hiding as well as I could behind the scattered ruins.

In this manner I contrived almost to reach the foot of the ladder without being discovered. I had a strange fancy for capturing the thief single-handed and monopolising all the glory of saving the famous diamonds. Waiting patiently until he had just reached the window, I rushed forward and seized the ladder.

"It's no use resisting," I shouted; "if you don't give up quietly, I'll shake."

At this point a second figure stepped out from behind a laurel bush and effectually silenced any further threats by dealing me a heavy blow on the head.

For days I lay insensible from concussion of the brain. When I was at last pronounced convalescent, Maitland was admitted to my room, being bound by solemn promises not to excite me in any way. With heartfelt gratitude he shook my hand and thanked me for saving the family diamonds.

"I shall take better care of them in the future," he said. "Catch me leaving them about in my dressing-room again. No, they shall always go straight back into the safe. Mrs. Maitland was right about that, though it wouldn't do to confess it. Precious lucky for me that

you heard the burglars and ran out; though I wouldn't advise you to try and tackle two muscular ruffians by yourself another time. It was just a chance that one broke his leg when you pulled down the ladder, otherwise they would have finished you off before we arrived on the scene."

I may here remark that I never thought it necessary to correct the version of the story which I found was already generally accepted. To this day Maitland firmly believes that I was just getting into bed, when, with supernatural acuteness, I divined the presence of robbers under his dressing-room window, and creeping quietly out attacked them in the rear.

"By-the-bye, is Miss Latouche still staying here?" I presently inquired in as calm a voice as I could command.

"No, she left suddenly the day after your accident. She complained of feeling upset by the affair, and wished to go home. We did not press her to stay, as she is liable to nervous attacks which are rather alarming. Why, that very night, curiously enough, I met her evidently walking in her sleep down the passage as I rushed out at your shout. She passed quite close to me without making any sign, and was quite unconscious of it next day—in fact referred with some surprise to having slept all through the row."

"Has she always had these peculiar ways?" I asked with interest.

"Well, I always thought her an imaginative, fanciful sort of girl, but she has certainly been much worse since that poor fellow's death. What, you never heard the story? It was at a picnic, and she insisted upon his climbing some rocks to get her a certain flower, just for the sake of giving trouble, as girls do. The poor lad's foot slipped, and he rolled right over a precipice and was dashed to pieces. Of course it was a shocking thing, but it's a pity she became so morbid about it, as no real blame attached to her. Now I must not talk too much or the doctor will say I have tired you; so good-bye for the present."

And that was the last I heard of Irene Latouche.

M. L. GOW. R. TAYLOR.

I SAW AND RECOGNIZED THE MYSTERIOUS MIDNIGHT VISITOR.

THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY, 1891.

THE FATE OF THE HARA DIAMOND.

CHAPTER V.

AT ROSE COTTAGE.

ON regaining my senses I found myself in a cozy little bed, in a cozy little room, with an old gentleman sitting by my side gently chafing one of my hands—a gentleman with white hair and a white moustache, with a ruddy face and a smile that made me fall in love with him at first sight.

"Did I not say that she would do famously in a little while?" he cried, in a cheery voice that it did one good to listen to. "I believe the Poppetina has only been hoaxing us all this time: pretending to be half-drowned just to find out whether anyone would make a fuss about her. Is not that the truth, little one?"

"If you please, sir, where am I? And are you a doctor?" I asked, faintly.

"I am not a doctor, either of medicine or law," answered the white-haired gentleman. "I am Major Strickland, and this place is Rose Cottage—the magnificent mansion which I call my own. But you had better not talk, my dear—at least not just yet: not till the doctor himself has seen you."

"But how did I get here?" I pleaded. "Do tell me that, please."

"Simply thus. My nephew Geordie was out mooning on the bridge when he heard a cry for help. Next minute he saw you and your boat go over the weir. He rushed down to the quiet water at the foot of the falls, plunged in, and fished you out before you had time to get more than half-drowned. My housekeeper, Deborah, put you to bed, and here you are. But I am afraid that you have hurt yourself among those ugly stones that line the weir; so Geordie has gone off for the doctor, and we shall soon know how you really are. One question I must ask you, in order that I may send word to your friends. What is your name? and where do you live?"

Before I could reply, the village doctor came bounding up the stairs three at a time. Five minutes sufficed him for my case. A good night's rest and a bottle of his mixture were all that was required. A few hours would see me as well as ever. Then he went.

"And now for the name and address, Poppetina," said the smiling Major. "We must send word to papa and mamma without a moment's delay."

"I have neither papa nor mamma," I answered. "My name is Janet Hope, and I come from Deepley Walls."

"From Deepley Walls!" exclaimed the Major. "I thought I knew everybody under Lady Chillington's roof, but I never heard of you before to-night, my dear."

Then I told him that I had been only two days with Lady Chillington, and that all of my previous life that I could remember had been spent at Park Hill Seminary.

The Major was evidently puzzled by what I had told him. He mused for several moments without speaking. Hitherto my face had been in half-shadow, the candle having been placed behind the curtain that fell round the head of the bed, so as not to dazzle my eyes. This candle the Major now took, and held it about a yard above my head, so that its full light fell on my upturned face. I was swathed in a blanket, and while addressing the Major had raised myself on my elbow in bed. My long black hair, still damp, fell wildly round my shoulders.

The moment Major Strickland's eyes rested on my face, on which the full light of the candle was now shining, his ruddy cheek paled; he started back in amazement, and was obliged to replace the candlestick on the table.

"Great Heavens! what a marvellous resemblance!" he exclaimed. "It cannot arise from accident merely. There must be a hidden link somewhere."

Then taking the candle for the second time, he scanned my face again with eyes that seemed to pierce me through and through. "It is as if one had come to me suddenly from the dead," I heard him say in a low voice. Then with down-bent head and folded arms he took several turns across the room.

"Sir, of whom do I remind you?" I timidly asked.

"Of someone, child, whom I knew when I was young—of someone who died long years before you were born." There was a ring of pathos in his voice that seemed like the echo of some sorrowful story.

"Are you sure that you have no other name than Janet Hope?" he asked, presently.

"None, sir, that I know of. I have been called Janet Hope ever since I can remember."

"But about your parents? What were they called, and where did they live?"

"I know nothing whatever about them except what Sister Agnes told me yesterday."

"And she said—what?"

"That my father was drowned abroad several years ago, and that my mother died a year later."

"Poverina! But it is strange that Sister Agnes should have known your parents. Perhaps she can supply the missing link. The mention of her name reminds me that I have not yet sent word to Deepley Walls that you are safe and sound at Rose Cottage. Geordie must start without a moment's delay. I am an old friend of Lady Chillington, my dear, so that she will be quite satisfied when she learns that you are under my roof."

"But, sir, when shall I see the gentleman who got me out of the water?" I asked.

"What, Geordie? Oh, you'll see Geordie in the morning, never fear! A good boy! a fine boy! though it's his old uncle who says it."

Then he rang the bell, and when Deborah, his only servant, came up, he committed me with many injunctions into her charge. Then taking my head gently between his hands, he kissed me tenderly on the forehead, and wished me "Good-night, and happy dreams."

Deborah was very kind. She brought me up a delicious little supper, and decided that there was no need for me to take the doctor's nauseous mixture. She took it herself instead, but merely as a sop to her conscience and my own; "for, after all, you know, there's very little difference in physic—it's all nasty; and I daresay this mixture will do my lumbago no harm."

The effects of the accident had almost entirely passed away by next morning, and I was dressed and downstairs by seven o'clock. I found the Major hard at work digging up the garden for his winter crops. "Ah, Poppetina, down so early!" he cried. "And how do we feel this morning, eh? None the worse for our ducking, I hope."

I assured him that I was quite well, and that I had never felt better in my life.

"That will be good news for her ladyship," he replied, "and will prove to her that Miss Hope has not fallen among Philistines. In any case, she cannot be more pleased than I am to find that you have sustained no harm from your accident. There is something, Poverina, in that face of yours that brings back the past to me strangely. But here comes Master Geordie."

I turned and saw a young man sauntering slowly down the pathway. He was very fair, and, to me, seemed very handsome. He had blue eyes, and his hair was a mass of short, crisp flaxen curls. From the way in which the Major regarded him as he came lounging up, I could see that the old soldier was very proud of his young Adonis of a nephew. The latter lifted his hat as he opened the wicket, and bade his uncle good-morning. Me he did not for the moment see.

"Miss Hope is not up yet, I suppose?" he said. "I trust she is none the worse for her tumble over the weir."

"Our little water-nymph is here to answer for herself," said the Major. "The roses in her cheeks seem all the brighter for their wetting."

George Strickland turned smilingly towards me, and held out his hand. "I am very glad to find that you have suffered so little from your accident," he said. "When I fished you out of the river last night you looked so death-like that I was afraid we should not be able to bring you round without difficulty."

Tears stood in my eyes as I took his hand. "Oh, sir, how brave, how noble it was of you to act as you did! You saved my life at the risk of your own; and how can I ever thank you enough?"

A bright colour came into his cheek as I spoke. "My dear child, you must not speak in that way," he said. "What I did was a very ordinary thing. Anyone else in my place would have done precisely the same. I must not claim more merit than is due for an action so simple."

"To you it may seem a simple thing to do, but I cannot forget that it was my life that you saved."

"What an old-fashioned princess it is!" said the Major. "Why, it must have been born a hundred years ago, and have had a fairy for its godmother. But here comes Deborah to tell us that breakfast is ready. Toasted bacon is better than pretty speeches; so come along with you, and make believe that you have known each other for a twelvemonth at least."

Rose Cottage was a tiny place, and there were not wanting proofs that the Major's income was commensurate with the scale of his establishment. A wise economy had to be a guiding rule in Major Strickland's life, otherwise Mr. George's college expenses would never have been met, and that young gentleman would not have had a proper start in life. Deborah was the only servant that the little household could afford; but then the Major himself was gardener, butler, valet and page in one. Thus—he cleaned the knives in a machine of his own invention; he brushed his own clothes; he lacquered his own boots, and at a pinch could mend them. He dug and planted his own garden, and grew enough potatoes and green-stuff to serve his little family the year round. In a little paddock behind his garden the Major kept a cow; in the garden itself he had half-a-dozen hives; while not far away was a fowl-house that supplied him with more eggs than he could dispose of, except by sale. The Major's maxim was, that the humblest offices of labour could be dignified by a gentleman, and by his own example he proved the rule. What few leisure hours he allowed himself were chiefly spent with rod and line on the banks of the Adair.

George Strickland was an orphan, and had been adopted and brought up by his uncle since he was six years old. So far, the

uncle had been able to supply the means for having him educated in accordance with his wishes. For the last three years George had been at one of the public schools, and now he was at home for a few weeks' holiday previously to going to Cambridge.

It will of course be understood that but a very small portion of what is here set down respecting Rose Cottage and its inmates was patent to me at that first visit; much of it, indeed, did not come within my cognizance till several years afterwards.

When breakfast was over, the Major lighted an immense meerschaum, and then invited me to accompany him over his little demesne. To a girl whose life had been spent within the four bare walls of a school-room, everything was fresh and everything was delightful. First to the fowl-house, then to the hives, and after that to see the brindled calf in the paddock, whose gambols and general mode of conducting himself were so utterly absurd that I laughed more in ten minutes after seeing him than I had done in ten years previously.

When we got back to the cottage, George was ready to take me on the river. The Major went down with us and saw us safely on board the *Water Lily*, bade us good-bye for an hour, and then went about his morning's business. I was rather frightened at first, the *Water Lily* was such a tiny craft, so long and narrow that it seemed to me as if the least movement on one side must upset it. But George showed me exactly where to sit, and gave me the tiller-ropes, with instructions how to manage them, and was himself so full of quiet confidence that my fears quickly died a natural death, and a sweet sense of enjoyment took their place.

We were on that part of the river which was below the weir, and as we put out from shore the scene of my last night's adventure was clearly visible. There, spanning the river just above the weir, was the open-work timber bridge on which George was standing when my cry for help struck his ears. There was the weir itself, a sheet of foaming, frothing water, that as it fell dashed itself in white-lipped passion against the rounded boulders that seemed striving in vain to turn it from its course. And here, a little way from the bottom of the weir, was the pool of quiet water over which our little boat was now cleaving its way, and out of which the handsome young man now sitting opposite to me had plucked me, bruised and senseless, only a few short hours ago. I shuddered and could feel myself turn pale as I looked. George seemed to read my thoughts; he smiled, but said nothing. Then bending all his strength to the oars, he sent the *Water Lily* spinning on her course. All my skill and attention were needed for the proper management of the tiller, and for a little while all morbid musings were banished from my mind.

Scarcely a word passed between us during the next half-hour, but I was too happy to care much for conversation. When we had gone a couple of miles or more, George pointed out a ruinous old house that

stood on a dreary flat about a quarter of a mile from the river. Many years ago, he told me, that house had been the scene of a terrible murder, and was said to have been haunted ever since. Nobody would live in it; it was shunned as a place accursed, and was now falling slowly into decay and ruin. I listened to the story with breathless interest, and the telling of it seemed to make us quite old friends. After this there seemed no lack of subjects for conversation. George shipped his oars, and the boat was allowed to float lazily down the stream. He told about his schooldays, and I told about mine. The height of his ambition, he said, was to go into the army, and become a soldier like his dear old uncle. But Major Strickland wanted him to become a lawyer; and, owing everything to his uncle as he did, it was impossible for him not to accede to his wishes. "Besides which," added George, with a sigh, "a commission is an expensive thing to buy, and dear old uncle is anything but rich."

When we first set out that morning I think that George, from the summit of his eighteen years, had been inclined to look down upon me as a little school miss, whom he might patronise in a kindly sort of way, but whose conversation could not possibly interest a man of his sense and knowledge of the world. But whether it arose from that "old-fashioned" quality of which Major Strickland had made mention, which caused me to seem so much older than my years; or whether it arose from the genuine interest I showed in all he had to say; certain it is that long before we got back to Rose Cottage we were talking as equals in years and understanding; but that by no means prevented me from looking up to him in my own mind as to a being superior, not only to myself, but to the common run of humanity. I was sorry when we got back in sight of the weir, and as I stepped ashore I thought that this morning and the one I had spent with Sister Agnes in Charke Forest were the two happiest of my life. I had no prevision that the fair-haired young man with whom I had passed three such pleasant hours would, in after years, influence my life in a way that just now I was far too much a child even to dream of.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GROWTH OF A MYSTERY.

We started at five o'clock to walk back to Deepley Walls, the Major, and I, and George. It was only two miles away across the fields. I was quite proud to be seen in the company of so stately a gentleman as Major Strickland, who was dressed this afternoon as for a visit of ceremony. He had on a blue frock-coat, tightly buttoned, to which the builder had imparted an intangible something that smacked undeniably of the old soldier. He wore a hat rather wide in the brim; a high stiff checked cravat; a white vest; and lacquered military boots, over which his tightly-strapped trousers fell without a

crease. He had white buckskin gloves, a stout silver-headed malacca cane, and carried a choice geranium in his button-hole.

There was not much conversation among us by the way. The Major's usual flow of talk seemed to have deserted him this afternoon, and his mood seemed unconsciously to influence both George and me. Lady Chillington's threat to send me to a French school weighed down my spirits. I had found dear friends—Sister Agnes, the kind-hearted Major, and his nephew, only to be torn from them—to be plunged back into the cold, cheerless monotony of school-girl life, where there would be no one to love me, but many to find fault.

We went back by way of the plantation. George would not go any farther than the wicket at its edge, and it was agreed that he should there await the Major's return from the Hall. "I hope, Miss Janet, that we shall see you at Rose Cottage again before many days are over," he said, as he took my hand to bid me farewell. "Uncle has promised to ask her ladyship to spare you for a few days."

"I shall be very, very glad to come, Mr. George. As long as I live I shall be in your debt, for I cannot forget that I owe you my life."

"The fairy godmother is whispering in her ear," said the Major in a loud aside. "She talks like a woman of forty."

While still some distance away we could see Lady Chillington sunning herself on the western terrace. With a pang of regret I saw that Sister Agnes was not with her. The Major quickened his pace; I clung to his hand, and felt without seeing that her ladyship's eyes were fixed upon me severely.

"I have brought back your wandering princess," said the Major, in his cheery way, as he lifted his hat. Then, as he took her proffered hand, "I hope your ladyship is in perfect health."

"No princess, Major Strickland, but a base beggar brat," said Lady Chillington, without heeding his last words. "From the first moment of my seeing her I had a presentiment that she would cause me nothing but trouble and annoyance. That presentiment has been borne out by facts—by facts!" She nodded her head at the Major, and rubbed one lean hand viciously within the other.

"Your ladyship forgets that the child herself is here. Pray consider her feelings."

"Were my feelings considered by those who sent her to Deepley Walls? I ought to have been consulted in the matter—to have had time given me to make fresh arrangements. It was enough to be burdened with the cost of her maintenance, without the added nuisance of having her before me as a continual eyesore. But I have arranged. Next week she leaves Deepley Walls for the Continent, and if I never see her face again, so much the better for both of us."

"With all due respect to your ladyship, it seems to me that your tone is far more bitter than the occasion demands. What may be the relationship between Miss Hope and yourself it is quite impos-

sible for me to say; but that there is a tie of some sort between you I cannot for a moment doubt."

"And pray, Major Strickland, what reason may you have for believing that a tie of any kind exists between this young person and the mistress of Deepley Walls?"

"I will take my stand on one point: on the extraordinary resemblance which this child bears to ——"

"To whom, Major Strickland?"

"To one who lies buried in Elvedon churchyard. You know whom I mean. Such a likeness is far too remarkable to be the result of accident."

"I deny the existence of any such likeness," said Lady Chillington, vehemently. "I deny it utterly. You are the victim of your own disordered imagination. Likeness, forsooth!" She laughed a bitter, contemptuous laugh, and seemed to think that she had disposed of the question for ever.

"Come here, child," said the Major, taking me kindly by the hand, and leading me close up to her ladyship. "Look at her, Lady Chillington," he added; "scan her features thoroughly, and tell me then that the likeness of which I speak is nothing more than a figment of my own brain."

Lady Chillington drew herself up haughtily. "To please you in a whim, Major Strickland, which I cannot characterise as anything but ridiculous, I will try to discover this fancied resemblance." Speaking thus, her ladyship carried her glass to her eye, and favoured me with a cold, critical stare, under which I felt my blood boil with grief and indignation.

"Pshaw! Major Strickland, you are growing old and foolish. I cannot perceive the faintest trace of such a likeness as you mention. Besides, if it really did exist it would prove nothing. It would merely serve to show that there may be certain secrets within Deepley Walls which not even Major Strickland's well-known acumen can fathom."

"After that, of course I can only bid your ladyship farewell," said the offended Major, with a ceremonious bow. Then turning to me: "Good-bye, my dear Miss Janet, for the present. Even at this, the eleventh hour, I must intercede with Lady Chillington to grant you permission to come and spend part of next week with us at Rose Cottage."

"Oh! take her, and welcome; I have no wish to keep her here. But you will stop to dinner, Major, when we will talk of these things further. And now, Miss Pest, you had better run away. You have heard too much already."

I was glad enough to get away; so after a hasty kiss to Major Strickland, I hurried indoors; and once in my own bed-room, I burst into an uncontrollable fit of crying. How cruel had been Lady Chillington's words! and her looks had been more cruel than they.

I was still weeping when Sister Agnes came into the room. She had but just returned from Eastbury. She knelt beside me, and took me in her arms and kissed me, and wiped away my tears. "Why was I crying?" she asked. I told her of all that Lady Chillington had said.

"Oh! cruel, cruel of her to treat you thus!" she said. "Can nothing move her — nothing melt that heart of adamant? But, Janet, dear, you must not let her sharp words wound you so deeply. Would that my love could shield you from such trials in future. But that cannot always be. You must strive to regard such things as part of that stern discipline of life which is designed to tutor our wayward hearts and rebellious spirits, and bring them into harmony with a will superior to our own. And now you must tell me all about your voyage down the Adair, and your rescue by that brave George Strickland. Ah! how grieved I was, when the news was brought to Deepley Walls, that I could not hasten to you, and see with my own eyes that you had come to no harm! But I was chained to my post, and could not stir."

Scarcely had Sister Agnes done speaking when the air was filled with a strain of music that seemed to be more sweet and solemn than anything I had ever heard before. All the soreness melted out of my heart as I listened; all my troubles seemed to take to themselves wings, and life to put on an altogether different aspect from any it had ever worn to me before. I saw clearly that I had not been so good a girl in many ways as I might have been. I would try my best not to be so inattentive at church in future, and I would never, no, not even on the coldest night in winter, neglect to say my prayers before getting into bed.

"What is it? Where does it come from?" I whispered into the ear of Sister Agnes.

"It is Father Spiridion playing the organ in the west gallery."

"And who is Father Spiridion?"

"A good man and my friend. Presently you shall be introduced to him."

No word more was spoken till the playing ceased. Then Sister Agnes took me by the hand and we went towards the west gallery. Father Spiridion saw us, and paused on the top of the stairs.

"This is the child, holy father, of whom I have spoken to you once or twice; the child, Janet Hope."

The father's shrewd blue eyes took me in from head to foot at a glance. He was a tall, thin and slightly cadaverous-looking man, with high aquiline features; and with an indefinable something about him that made me recognise him on the spot as a gentleman. He wore a coarse brown robe that reached nearly to his feet, the cowl of which was drawn over his head. When Sister Agnes had spoken he laid his hand gently on my head, and said something I could not

understand. Then placing his hand under my chin, he said, "Look me straight in the face, child."

I lifted my eyes and looked him fairly in the face, till his blue eyes lighted up with a smile. Then patting me on the cheek, he said, addressing Sister Agnes, "Nothing shifty there, at any rate. It is a face full of candour, and of that innocent fearlessness which childhood should always have, but too often loses in an evil world. I dare be bound now, little Janet, that thou art fond of sweetmeats?"

"Oh, yes, sir, if you please."

"By some strange accident I find here in my *soutane* a tiny box of bonbons. They might have been put there expressly for a little sweet tooth of a Janet. Nothing could be more opportune. Take them, my child, with Father Spiridion's blessing; and sometimes remember his name in thy prayers."

I did not see Father Spiridion again before I was sent away to school, but in after years our threads of life crossed and re-crossed each other strangely, in a way that neither he nor I even dreamed of at that first interview.

My life at Deepley Walls lengthened out from day to day, and in many ways I was exceedingly happy. My chief happiness lay in the love of dear Sister Agnes, with whom I spent at least one or two hours every day. Then I was very fond of Major Strickland, who, I felt sure, liked me in return—liked me for myself, and liked me still more, perhaps, for the strange resemblance which he said I bore to some dear one whom he had lost many years before. Of George Strickland, too, I was very fond, but with a shy and diffident sort of liking. I held him as so superior to me in every way that I could only worship him from a distance. The Major fetched me over to Rose Cottage several times. Such events were for me holidays in the true sense of the word. Another source of happiness arose from the fact that I saw very little of Lady Chillington. The indifference with which she had at first regarded me seemed to have deepened into absolute dislike. I was forbidden to enter her apartments, and I took care not to be seen by her when she was walking or riding out. I was sorry for her dislike, and yet glad that she dispensed with my presence. I was far happier in the housekeeper's room, where I was treated like a little queen. Dance and I soon learned to love each other very heartily.

Those who have accompanied me thus far may not have forgotten the account of my first night at Deepley Walls, nor how frightened I was by the sound of certain mysterious footsteps in the room over mine. The matter was explained simply enough by Dance next day as a whim of Lady Chillington, who, for some reason best known to herself, chose that room out of all the big old house as the scene of her midnight perambulations. When, therefore, on one or two subsequent occasions, I was disturbed in a similar way, I was no longer frightened, but only rendered sleepless and uncomfortable for the

time being. I felt at such times, so profound was the surrounding silence, as if every living creature in the world, save Lady Chillington and myself, were asleep.

But before long that room over mine acquired for itself in my mind a new and dread significance. A consciousness gradually grew upon me that there was about it something quite out of the common way; that its four walls held within themselves some grim secret, the rites appertaining to which were gone through when I and the rest of the uninitiated were supposed to be in bed and asleep. I cannot tell what it was that first made me suspect the existence of this secret. Certainly not the midnight walks of Lady Chillington. Perhaps a certain impalpable atmosphere of mystery, which, striking keenly on the sensitive nerves of a child, strung by recent events to a higher pitch than usual, broke down the first fine barrier that separates things common and of the earth earthy, from those dim intuitions which even the dullest of us feel at times of things spiritual and unseen. But however that may be, it so fell out that I, who at school had been one of the soundest of sleepers, had now become one of the worst. It often happened that I would awake in the middle of the night, even when there was no Lady Chillington to disturb me, and would so lie, sleepless, with wide-staring eyes, for hours, while all sorts of weird pictures would paint themselves idly in the waste nooks and corners of my brain. One fancy I had, and for many nights I thought it nothing more than fancy, that I could hear soft and muffled footsteps passing up and down the staircase just outside my door; and that at times I could even faintly distinguish them in the room over mine, where, however, they never stayed for more than a few minutes at any one time.

In one of my daylight explorations about the old house I ventured up the flight of stairs that led from the landing outside my door to the upper rooms. At the top of these stairs I found a door that differed from every other door I had seen at Deepley Walls. In colour it was a dull dead black, and it was studded with large square-headed nails. It was without a handle of any kind, but was pierced by one tiny keyhole. To what strange chamber did this terrible door give access? and who was the mysterious visitor who came here night after night with hushed footsteps and alone? These were two questions that weighed heavily on my mind, that troubled me persistently when I lay awake in the dark, and even refused by day to be put entirely on one side.

By-and-by the mystery deepened. In a recess close to the top of the flight of stairs that led to the black door was an old-fashioned case clock. When this clock struck the hour, two small mechanical figures dressed like German burghers of the sixteenth century came out of two little turrets, bowed gravely to each other, and then retired, like court functionaries, backwards. It was a source of great pleasure to me to watch these figures go through their hourly pantomime.

But after a time it came into my head to wonder whether they did their duty by night as well as by day; whether they came out and bowed to each other in the dark, or waited quietly in their turrets till morning. In pursuance of this inquiry, I got out of bed one night after Dance had left me, and relighted my candle. I knew that it was just on the stroke of eleven, and here was a capital opportunity for studying the customs of my little burghers by night. I stole up the staircase with my candle, and waited for the clock to strike. It struck, and out came the little figures as usual.

"Perhaps they only came because they saw my light," I said to myself. I felt that the question as to their mode of procedure in the dark was still an unsettled one.

But scarcely had the clock finished striking when I was disturbed by the shutting of a door downstairs. Fearing that someone was coming, and that the light might betray me, I blew out my candle and waited to hear more. But all was silent in the house. I turned to go down, but as I did so, I saw with astonishment that a thin streak of light shone from under the black door. I stood like one petrified. Was there anyone inside the room? Listening intently, I waited for full five minutes without stirring a limb. Silence the most profound upstairs and down. Stepping on tiptoe, I went back to my room, shut myself in, and crept gladly into bed.

Next night my curiosity overmastered my fear. As soon as Dance was gone I crept upstairs in the dark. One peep was enough. As on the previous night, a thin streak of light shone from under the black door—evidence that it was lighted up inside. Next night, and for several nights afterwards, I put the same plan in operation with precisely the same result. The light was always there.

Having my attention thus concentrated as it were upon this one room, and lying awake so many hours when I ought to have been asleep, my suspicions gradually merged into certainty that it was visited every midnight by someone who came and went so lightly and quietly that only by intently listening could I distinguish the exact moment of their passing my door. Who was this visitor that came and went so mysteriously? To discover this, without being myself discovered, was a matter that required both tact and courage, but it was one on which I was almost as much a monomaniac as a child well can be. To have opened my door when the landing was perfectly dark would have been to see nothing. To have opened the door with a candle in my hand would have been to betray myself. I must wait for a moonlight night, which would light up the landing sufficiently for my purpose. I waited. My opportunity came. With my doorway in deep shadow, my door just sufficiently open for me to peer through, and with the staircase lighted up by rays of the moon, I saw and recognised the mysterious midnight visitor to the room over mine. I saw and recognised Sister Agnes.

CHAPTER VII.

EXIT JANET HOPE.

THE effect upon me of the discovery that Sister Agnes was the midnight visitor of the room over mine was at once to stifle that brood of morbid fancies with which of late both room and visitor had become associated in my mind. I loved her so thoroughly, she was to me so complete an embodiment of all that was noble and beautiful in womanhood, that however unsatisfying to my curiosity such visits might be, I could not doubt that she must have excellent reasons for making them. One thing was quite evident, that since she herself had said nothing respecting the room and her visits to it, it was impossible for me to question her on the matter. Such being the case, I felt that it would be a poor return for all her goodness to me to question Dance or any other person respecting what she herself wished to keep concealed. Besides, it was doubtful whether Dance would tell me anything, even if I were to ask her. She had warned me a few hours after my arrival at Deepley Walls that there were many things under that roof respecting which I must seek no explanation; and with no one of the other domestics was I in any way intimate.

Still my curiosity remained unsatisfied; still over the room itself hung a veil of mystery which I would fain have lifted. All my visits to the room to see whether the light shone under the door had hitherto been made previously to the midnight visits of Sister Agnes. The question that now arose in my mind was whether the mysterious thread of light was or was not visible after Sister Agnes's customary visit—whether, in fact, it shone there all the night through. In order to solve this doubt, I lay awake the night following that of my discovery of Sister Agnes. Listening intently, with my bed-room door ajar, I heard her go upstairs, and ten minutes later I could just distinguish her smothered footfall as she came down. I heard the door at the bottom of the corridor shut behind her, and then I knew that I was safe.

Slipping out of bed, I stole, barefooted as I was, out of my bed-room and up the flight of stairs which led to the black door. Of ghosts in the ordinary meaning of that word—in the meaning which it has for five children out of six—I had no fear; my fears, such as they were, ran in quite another groove. I went upstairs slowly, with shut eyes, counting each stair as I put my feet on it from one up to ten. I knew that from the tenth stair the streak of light, if there, would be visible. On the tenth stair I opened my eyes. There was the thread of light shining clear and steady under the black door. For a minute I stood looking at it. In the intense silence the beating of my heart was painfully audible. Grasping the

banister with one hand, I went downstairs backwards, step by step, and so regained the sanctuary of my own room.

I scarcely know in what terms to describe, or how to make sufficiently clear, the strange sort of fascination there was for me in those nightly rambles—in living perpetually on the edge of a mystery. While daylight lasted the feeling slumbered within me; I could even take myself to task for wanting to pry into a secret that evidently in nowise concerned me. But as soon as twilight set in, and night's shadows began to creep timidly out of their corners, so surely could I feel the spell working within me, the desire creeping over me to pluck out the heart of the mystery that lay hidden behind the black nail-studded door upstairs. Sometimes I climbed the staircase at one hour, sometimes at another; but there was no real sleep for me, nothing but fitful uneasy dozes, till the brief journey had been made. After climbing to the tenth stair, and satisfying myself that the light was there, I would creep back noiselessly to bed, and fall at once into a deep dreamless sleep that was often prolonged till late in the forenoon.

At length there came a night when the secret was laid bare, and the spell broken for ever. I had been in bed for two hours and a half, lying in that half-dreamy state in which facts and fancies are so inextricably jumbled together that it is too much labour to disintegrate the two, when the clock struck one. Next moment I was out of bed, standing with the handle of the half-opened door in my hand, listening to the silence. I had heard Sister Agnes come down some time ago, and I felt secure from interruption. To-night the moon shone brightly in through a narrow window in the gable, and all the way upstairs there was a track of white light as though a company of ghosts had lately passed that way. As I went upstairs I counted them up to the tenth, and then I stood still. Yes, the thread of light was there as it always was, only—only somehow it seemed broader to-night than I had ever noticed it as being before. It *was* broader. I could not be mistaken. While I was still pondering over this problem, and wondering what it might mean, my eye was taken by the dull gleam of some small white object about half way up the door. My eyes were taken by it, and would not leave it till I had ascertained what it really was. I approached it step by step, slowly, and then I saw that it was in reality that which I had imagined it to be. It was a small silver key—Sister Agnes's key—which she had forgotten to take away with her on leaving the room. Moreover the door was unlocked, having been simply pulled to by Sister Agnes on leaving, which explained why the streak of light showed larger than common.

I felt as though I were walking in a dream, so unreal did the whole business seem to me by this time. I was in a moonlight glamour; the influence of the silver orb was upon me. Of self-volition I seemed to have little or none left. I was given over to

unseen powers, viewless, that dwell in space, of which we have ordinarily no human cognition. At such moments as these, and I have gone through many of them, I am no longer the Janet Hope of everyday life. I am lifted up and beyond my ordinary self. I obey a law whose beginning and whose ending I am alike ignorant of: but I feel that it is a law and not an impulse. I am led blindly forward, but I go unresistingly, feeling that there is no power left in me save that of obeying.

Did I push open the door of the secret room, or was it opened for me by unseen hands? I know not. I only know that it closed noiselessly behind me of its own accord and left me standing there wondering, alone, with white face and staring eyes.

The chamber was a large one, or seemed so to me. It was draped entirely in black, hiding whatever windows there might be. The polished wood floor was bare. The ceiling was painted with a number of sprawling Cupids, some of them scattering flowers, others weaving leafy chaplets, presumably to crown the inane-looking goddess reclining in their midst on a bank of impossible cloud. But both Cupids and goddess were dingy with age, and seemed to have grown too old for such Arcadian revels.

The room was lighted with a dozen large wax candles placed in four silver tripods, each of them about six feet in height, and screwed to the floor to prevent their being overturned. All these preparations were not without an object. That object was visible in the middle of the room. It was a large black coffin studded with silver nails, placed on a black slab about four feet in height, and more than half covered with a large pall.

I felt no fear at sight of this grim object. I was lifted too far above my ordinary self to be afraid. I simply wondered—wondered who lay asleep inside the coffin, and how long he or she had been there.

The only article of furniture in the room was a *prie-dieu* of black oak. I knelt on this, and gazed on the coffin, and wondered. My curiosity urged me to go up to it, and turn down the pall, and ascertain whether the name of the occupant was engraved on the lid. But stronger than my curiosity was a certain repugnance to go near it which I could not overcome. That some person was shut up there who during life had been of importance in the world, I could not doubt. This, too, was the room in which Lady Chillington took her midnight perambulations, and that coffin was the object she came to contemplate. Perhaps the occupant of the coffin came out, and walked with my lady, and held ghostly converse with her on such occasions. I fancied that even now I could hear him breathing heavily, and turning over uneasily in his narrow bed. There seemed a rustling, too, among the folds of the sombre curtains as though someone were in hiding there; and that low faint sobbing sigh which quivered through the room, like an accent of unutterable

sorrow, whence did it come? Others than myself were surely there, though I might not be able to see them.

I knelt on the *prie-dieu*, stirring neither hand nor foot; as immovable, in fact, except for my breathing, as a figure cut out of stone. Looking and wondering still, after a time it seemed to me that the lights were growing dimmer, that the room was growing colder; that some baleful presence was beside me with malicious intent to gradually numb and chill the life out of me, to freeze me, body and soul, till the two could no longer hold together; and that when morning came, if ever it did come to that accursed room, my husk would be there indeed, but Janet Hope herself would be gone for ever. A viewless horror stirred my hair, and caused my flesh to creep. The baneful influence that was upon me was deepening in intensity; every minute that passed seemed to render me more powerless to break the spell. Suddenly the clock struck two. At the same moment a light footfall sounded on the stairs outside. It was Sister Agnes coming back to lock the door, and to fetch the key which she had left behind two hours before. I heard her approach the door, and I saw the door itself pulled close to; then the key was turned, the bolt shot into its place, the key was withdrawn, and I was left locked up alone in that terrible room.

But the proximity of another human being sufficed to break the spell under which I had been powerless only a minute before. Better risk discovery, better risk everything, than be left to pass the night where I was. Should that horror settle down upon me again, I felt that I must succumb to it. It would crush the life out of me as infallibly as though I were in the folds of some huge python. Long before morning I should be dead.

I slid from off the *prie-dieu*, and walking backward, with my eyes glancing warily to right and left, I reached the door and struck it with my fists. "Sister Agnes!" I cried, "Sister Agnes! do not leave me. I am here alone."

Again the curtains rustled, stirred by invisible fingers; again that faint long-drawn sigh ran like an audible shiver through the room. I heard eager fingers busy outside the door; a mist swam up before my eyes, and next moment I fainted dead away in the arms of Sister Agnes.

For three weeks after that time I lay very ill—lay very close to the edge of the grave. But for the ceaseless attentions and tender assiduities of Sister Agnes and Dance I should have slipped out of life and all my troubles. To them I owe it that I am now alive to write these lines. One bright afternoon, as I was approaching convalescence, Sister Agnes and I, sitting alone, got into conversation respecting the room upstairs, and my visit to it.

"But whose coffin is that, Sister Agnes?" I asked. "And why is it left there unburied?"

"It is the coffin of Sir John Chillington, her ladyship's late hus-

band," answered Sister Agnes, very gravely. "He died thirteen years ago. By his will a large portion of the property left to his widow was contingent on his body being kept unburied and above ground for twenty years. Lady Chillington elected to have the body kept in that room which you were so foolish as to visit without permission; and there it will probably remain till the twenty years shall have expired. All these facts are well known to the household; indeed, to the country for miles around; but it was not thought necessary to mention them to a child like you, whose stay in the house would be of limited duration, and to whom such knowledge could be of no possible benefit."

"But why do you visit the room every midnight, Sister Agnes?"

"It is the wish of Lady Chillington that, day and night, twelve candles shall be kept burning round the coffin, and ever since I came to reside at Deepley Walls it has been part of my duty to renew the candles once every twenty-four hours. Midnight is the hour appointed for the performance of that duty."

"Do you not feel afraid to go there alone at such a time?"

"Dear Janet, what is there to be afraid of? The dead have no power to harm us. We shall be as they are in a very little while. They are but travellers who have gone before us into a far country, leaving behind them a few poor relics, and a memory that, if we have loved them, ought to make us look forward with desire to the time when we shall see them again."

Three weeks later I left Deepley Walls. Madame Delclos was in London for a week, and it was arranged that I should return to France with her. Major Strickland took me up to town and saw me safely into her hands. My heart was very sad at leaving all my dear new-found friends, but Sister Agnes had exhorted me to fortitude before I parted from her, and I knew that neither by her, nor the Major, nor George, nor Dance, should I be forgotten. I saw Lady Chillington for a moment before leaving. She gave me two frigid fingers, and said that she hoped I should be a good girl, and attend assiduously to my lessons, for that in after life I should have to depend upon my own industry for a living. I felt at the moment that I would much rather do that than have to depend through life on her ladyship's bounty.

A few tears would come when the moment arrived for me to say farewell to the Major. He tried his best, in his hearty, affectionate way, to cheer me up. I flung my arms round his neck and kissed him tenderly. He turned abruptly, seized his hat, and rushed from the room. Whereupon Madame Delclos, who had been trying to look *sympathique*, drew herself up, frowned, and pinched one of my ears viciously. Forty-eight hours later I was safely shut up in the Pension Clissot.

Here my personal narrative ends. From this point the story of

which the preceding pages form a part will be recorded by another pen. It was deemed advisable by those to whose opinion in such matters I bow without hesitation, that this narrative of certain events in the life of a child—a necessary introduction to the narrative yet to come—should be written by the person whom it most concerned. Now that her task is done, she abnegates at once (and thankfully) the first person singular in favour of the third, and whatever is told of her in the following pages, is told, not by herself, but by that other pen, of which mention is made above.

Between the time when this curtain falls and the next one draws up, there is a lapse of seven years.

CHAPTER VIII.

BY THE SCOTCH EXPRESS.

Among other passengers, on a certain fine spring morning, by the 10 a.m. Scotch express, was one who had been so far able to propitiate the guard as to secure a whole compartment to himself. He was enjoying himself in a quiet way—smoking, and skimming his papers, and taking a bird's-eye view now and again at the landscape that was flying past him at the rate of forty miles an hour. Few people who cared to speculate as to his profession would have hesitated to set him down as a military man, even had not the words, "Captain Ducie," painted in white letters on a black portmanteau which protruded half-way from under his seat, rendered any such speculation needless. He must have been three or four-and-forty years old, judging from the lines about his mouth and eyes, but in some other respects he looked considerably younger. He wore neither beard nor whiskers, but his short hair, and his thick, drooping moustache were both jet black, and betrayed as yet, thanks either to Nature or Art, none of those straggling streaks of silver which tell so plainly of the advance of years. He had a clear olive complexion, a large aquiline nose and deep-set eyes, piercing and full of fire, under a grand sweep of eyebrow. In person he was tall and thin; broad-chested, but lean in the flank, with hands and feet that looked almost effeminate, so small were they in comparison with his size. A black frock-coat, tightly buttoned, set off to advantage a figure of which he might still be reasonably proud. The remainder of his costume was in quiet keeping with the first fashion of the period.

Captain Ducie smoked and read and stared out of the window much as eleven out of twelve of us would do under similar circumstances, while milepost after milepost flashed out for an instant and was gone. After a time he took a letter out of his breast-pocket, opened it, and read it. It was brief, and ran as under:—

"Stapleton, Scotland, March 31st.

"My dear Ned,—Since you wish it, come down here for a few

weeks; whether to recruit your health or your finances matters not. Mountain air and plain living are good for both. However, I warn you beforehand that you will find us very dull. Lady B.'s health is hardly what it ought to be, and we are seeing no company just now. If you like to take us as we are, I say again—come.

"As for the last paragraph of your letter, I scarcely know in what terms to answer it. You have already bled me so often the same way, that I have grown heartily sick of the process. This must be the last time of asking, my boy; I wish you clearly to understand that. This place has cost me a great deal of money of late, and I cannot spring you more than a hundred. For that amount I enclose you a cheque. Finis coronat opus. Bear those words in mind, and believe me when I say that you have had your last cheque

"From your affectionate cousin,

"BARNSTAKE."

"Consummate little prig!" murmured Captain Ducie to himself as he refolded the letter and put it away. "I can fancy the smirk on his face as he penned that precious effusion, and how, when he had finished it, he would trot off to his clothes-prop of a wife and ask her whether she did not think it at once amusing and severe. That letter shall cost your lordship fifty guineas. I don't allow people to write to me in that style with impunity."

He lighted another cigar frowningly. "I wonder if I was ever so really hard up as I am now?" he continued to himself. "I don't think I ever was quite. I have been in Queer Street many a time, but I've always found a friend round the corner, or have pulled myself through by the skin of the teeth somehow. But this time I see no lift in the cloud. My insolvency has become chronic; it is attacking the very citadel of life. I have not a single uncle or aunt to fall back upon. The poor creatures are all dead and buried, and their money all spent. Well!—Outlaw is an ugly word, but it is one that I shall have to learn how to spell before long. I shall have to leave my country for my country's good."

He puffed away fiercely for a little while, and then he resumed.

"It would not be a bad thing for a fellow like me to become a chief among the Red Skins—if they would have me. With them my lack of pence would be no bar to success. I can swim and shoot and ride: although I cannot paint a picture, I daresay that I could paint myself; and I know several fellows whose scalps I should have much pleasure in taking. As for the so-called amenities of civilized life, what are they worth to one who, like me, has no longer the means of enjoying them? After all, it is a question whether freedom and the prairie would not be preferable to Pall-Mall and a limited income of, say—twelve hundred a year—the sort of income that is just enough to make one the slave of society, but is not sufficient to pay for gilding its fetters. A station, by Jove! and with it the possibility of getting a drop of cognac."

As soon as the train came to a stand, Captain Ducie vacated his seat and went in search of the refreshment-room. On coming back five minutes later, he was considerably disgusted to find that he was no longer to have his compartment to himself. The seat opposite to that on which he had been sitting was already occupied by a gentleman who was wrapped up to the nose in rugs and furs.

"Any objection to smoking?" asked the Captain presently as the train began to move. He was pricking the end of a fresh cigar as he asked the question. The words might be civil, but the tone was offensive; it seemed to convey—"I don't care whether you object or not: I intend to enjoy my weed all the same."

The stranger, however, seemed in nowise offended. He smirked and quavered two yellow-gloved fingers out of his furs. "Oh, no, certainly not," he said. "I, too, am a smoker and shall join you presently."

He spoke with the slightest possible foreign accent, just sufficient to tell an educated ear that he was not an Englishman. If Captain Ducie's features were aquiline, those of the stranger might be termed vulturine—long, lean, narrow, with a thin, high-ridged nose, and a chin that was pointed with a tuft of thick, black hair. Except for this tuft he was clean shaven. His black hair, cropped close at back and sides, was trained into an elaborate curl on the top of the forehead and there fixed with *cosmétique*. Both hair and chin-tuft were of that uncompromising blue-black which tells unmistakably of the dye-pot. His skin was yellow and parchment-like, and stretched tightly over his forehead and high cheek-bones, but puckering into a perfect net-work of lines about a mouth whose predominant expression was one of mingled cynicism and suspicion. There was suspicion, too, in his small black eyes, as well as a sort of lurking fierceness which not even his most urbane and elaborate smile could altogether eliminate. In person he was very thin and somewhat under the middle height, and had all the air of a confirmed valetudinarian. He was dressed as no English gentleman would care to be seen dressed in public. A long brown velvet coat trimmed with fur; lavender-coloured trousers tightly strapped over patent leather boots; two or three vests of different colours under one made of the skin of some animal and fastened with gold buttons; a profusion of jewellery; an embroidered shirt-front and deep turn-down collar: such were the chief items of his attire. A hat with a very curly brim hung from the carriage roof, while for present head-gear he wore a sealskin travelling cap with huge lappets that came below his ears. In this cap, and wrapped to the chin in his bear-skin rug, he looked like some newly-discovered species of animal—a sort of cross between a vulture and a monkey, were such a thing possible, combining the deep-seated fierceness of the one with the fantastic cunning, and the impossibility of doing the most serious things without a grimace, of the other.

No sooner had Captain Ducie lighted his cigar than with an impatient movement he put down the window close to which he was sitting. It had been carefully put up by the stranger while Ducie was in the refreshment room; but the latter was a man who always studied his own comfort before that of anyone else, except when self whispered to him that such a course was opposed to his own interests, which was more than he could see in the present case.

The stranger gave a little sniggering laugh as the window fell noisily; then he shivered and drew his furs more closely around him. "It is strange how fond you English people are of what you call fresh air," he said. "In Italy fresh air may be a luxury, but it cannot be had in your hang-dog climate without one takes a catarrh at the same time."

Captain Ducie surveyed him coolly from head to foot for a moment or two. Then a sudden thought seemed to strike him. "I must really ask you to pardon my rudeness," he said, lifting his Glengarry. "If the open window is the least annoyance to you, by all means let it be shut. To me it is a matter of perfect indifference." As he spoke he pulled the window up, and then he turned on the stranger with a look that seemed to imply: "Although I seemed so truculent a few minutes ago, you see what a good-natured fellow I am at heart." In most of Captain Ducie's actions there was some ulterior motive at work, however trivial many of his actions might appear to an outsider, and in the present case it was not likely that he acted out of mere complaisance to a man whom he had never seen nor heard of ten minutes previously.

"You are too good—really far too good," said the stranger. "Suppose we compromise the matter?" With that his lean hands, encased in lemon-coloured gloves, let down the window a couple of inches, and fixed it there with the strap.

"Now really, you know, do just as you like about it," said the Captain, with that slow amused smile which became his face so well. "As I said before, I am altogether indifferent in the matter."

"As it is now, it will suit both of us, I think. And now to join you in your smoke."

From the net over his head he reached down a small mahogany case. This he opened, and from it extracted a large meerschaum pipe elaborately mounted with gold filigree work. Having charged the pipe from an embroidered pouch filled with choice Turkish tobacco, he struck an allumette and began to smoke.

"Decidedly an acquaintance worth cultivating," murmured the Captain under his breath. "But what country does the beggar belong to?" A question more easily asked than answered: at all events, it was one which the Captain found himself unable to solve to his own satisfaction. For a few minutes they smoked in silence.

"Do you travel far, to-day?" asked the stranger at length. "Are you going across the Border?"

"The end of my journey is Stapleton, Lord Barnstake's place, and not a great way from Edinburgh. Shall I have the pleasure of your company as far as I go by rail?"

"Ah, no, sir, not so far as that. Only to ——. There I must leave you, and take the train for Windermere. I live on the banks of your beautiful lake. Permettez-moi, monsieur," and with a movement that was a combination of a shrug, a grimace and a bow, the stranger drew a card-case from one of his pockets, and, extracting a card therefrom, handed it to Ducie.

The Captain took it with a bow, and, sticking his glass in his eye, read:—

M. Paul Platzoff.

Bon Repos,
Windermere.

The Captain in return handed over his pasteboard credential, and, this solemn rite being accomplished, conversation was resumed on more easy and agreeable terms.

"I daresay you are puzzling your brains as to my nationality," said Platzoff, with a smile. "I am not an Englishman; that you can tell from my accent. I am not a Frenchman, although I write 'monsieur' before my name. Still less am I either a German or an Italian. Neither am I a genuine Russian, although I look to Russia as my native country. In brief, my father was a Russian, my mother was a Frenchwoman, and I was born on board a merchantman during a gale of wind in the Baltic."

"Then I should call you a true cosmopolitan—a genuine citizen of the world," remarked Ducie, who was amused with his new friend's frankness.

"In ideas I strive to be such, but it is difficult at all times to overcome the prejudices of education and early training," answered Platzoff. "You, sir, are, I presume, in the army?"

"Formerly I was in the army, but I sold out nearly a dozen years ago," answered Ducie, drily. "Does this fellow expect me to imitate his candour?" thought the Captain. "Would he like to know all about my grandfather and grandmother, and that I have a cousin who is an earl? If so, I am afraid he will be disappointed."

"Did you see much service while you were in the army?" asked Platzoff.

"I saw a good deal of hard fighting in the East, although not on any large scale." Ducie was beginning to get restive. He was not the sort of man to quietly allow himself to be catechised by a stranger.

"I, too, know something of the East," said Platzoff. "Three of the happiest years of my life were spent in India. While out there I became acquainted with several gentlemen of your profession. With Colonel Leslie I was particularly intimate. I had been stopping with the poor fellow only a few days before that gallant affair at Ruckapore, in which he came by his death."

"I remember the affair you speak of," said Ducie. "I was in one of the other Presidencies at the time it happened."

"There was another officer in poor Leslie's regiment with whom I was also on very intimate terms. He died of cholera a little later on, and I attended him in his last moments. I allude to a Captain Charles Chillington. Did you ever meet with him in your travels?"

Captain Ducie's swarthy cheek deepened its hue. He paused to blow a speck of cigar ash off his sleeve before he spoke. "I did not know your Captain Charles Chillington," he said, in slow, deliberate accents. "Till the present moment I never heard of his existence."

Captain Ducie pulled his Glengarry over his brows, folded his arms, and shut his eyes. He had evidently made up his mind for a quiet snooze. Platzoff regarded him with a silent snigger. "Something I have said has pricked the gallant Captain under his armour," he muttered to himself. "Is it possible that he and Chillington were acquainted with each other in India? But what matters it to me if they were?"

When M. Platzoff had smoked his meerschaum to the last whiff, he put it carefully away, and disposed himself to follow Ducie's example in the matter of sleep. He rearranged his wraps, folded the arms, shut his eyes, and pressed his head resolutely against his cushion; but at the end of five minutes he opened his eyes, and seemed just as wakeful as before. "These beef-fed Englishmen seem as if they can sleep whenever and wherever they choose. Enviable faculty! I daresay the heifers on which they gorge possess it in almost as great perfection."

Hidden away among his furs was a small morocco-covered despatch-box. This he now proceeded to unlock, and to draw from it a folded paper which, on being opened, displayed a closely-written array of figures, as though it were the working out of some formidable problem in arithmetic. Platzoff smiled, and his smile was very different from his cynical snigger, as his eyes ran over the long array of figures. "I must try and get this finished as soon as I am back at Bon Repos," he muttered to himself. "I am frightened when I think what would happen if I were to die before its completion. My great secret would die with me, and perhaps hundreds of years would pass away before it would be brought to light. What a discovery it would be! To those concerned it would seem as though they had found the key-note of some lost religion—as though they had penetrated into some temple dedicated to the gods of eld."

His soliloquy was suddenly interrupted by three piercing shrieks

from the engine, followed by a terrible jolting and swaying of the carriage, which made it almost impossible for those inside to keep their seats. Captain Ducie was alive to the danger in a moment. One glance out of the window was enough. "We are off the line! Hold fast!" he shouted to Platzoff, drawing up his legs, and setting his teeth, and looking very fierce and determined. M. Platzoff tried to follow his English friend's example. His yellow complexion faded to a sickly green. With eyes in which there was no room now for anything save anguish and terror unspeakable, he yet snarled at the mouth and showed his teeth like a wolf brought hopelessly to bay.

The swaying and jolting grew worse. There was a grinding and crunching under the wheels of the carriage as though a thousand huge coffee-mills were at work. Suddenly the train parted in the middle, and while the forepart, with the engine, went ploughing through the ballast till brought up in safety a few hundred yards further on, the carriage in which were Ducie and Platzoff, together with the hinder part of the train, went toppling over a high embankment, and crashing down the side, and rolling over and over, came to a dead stand at the bottom, one huge mass of wreck and disaster.

(To be continued.)

SONNET.

YES, I have heard it oft: a few brief years
True life comprise. The rest is but a dream:
What though to thee like life it vainly seem.
Fool, trust it not; 'tis not what it appears.
We live but once. We die before the shears
Of Atropos the thread have clipped. True life
Is when with ardent youth's and passion's strife
We suffer and we feel. 'Tis when wild tears
Can flow and hearts can break, or 'neath the gaze
Of loved eyes beat. 'Tis when on eager wing
Of Hope we soar, and Past and Future bring
Within the Present's grasp. Ay, we live then,
But when that cup is quaffed what doth remain?
The dregs of days that follow upon days!

JULIA KAVANAGH.

MEDIUMS AND MYSTERIES.

By Narissa Rosavo.

SO long as the world lasts, no doubt a large portion of its inhabitants will run after that which the Scotch expressively term "uncanny." The absence of accurate knowledge and the impossibility of thorough scientific investigation, of separating the chaff from the wheat, the true from the counterfeit, becomes at one and the same time the charm and the counterblast to diligent searchers.

For the most part, these are persons of inferior mental calibre, of somewhat unrefined instincts; but, on the other hand, I have known mighty intellects lose themselves in this maze, where no firm clue can be seized by which to go forward safely, to advance at all, while the return journey must be made with *certain* loss. Persistent endeavour brings weakened faith in God, in place of that certainty spiritualists talk of when they say their arts are beneficial, proving a hereafter—a spiritual world.

It is not thus we get on firm footing. We but advance into sloughs of despond, led by wills of the wisp; and the girl mediums, the so-called clairvoyantes, invariably lose mental health and physical strength. It is but a matter of time, and they become hysteria patients or inhabitants of lunatic asylums. I have known a clever clergyman of the Church of England determine to find out the truth, if any, on this path. He made use of his own daughter in the search. The coil of delusion led him on until it became a choice of death or madness for the tender instrument with which he felt his way into the unseen world.

There is *something* along this road, call it odic force, or what you will. Science has not, perhaps cannot, ever get firm footing here; but the result of long and careful observation as yet only enables us to strike a sort of average. Experiments pursued for years with table-turning, planchettes, mediums, clairvoyantes, come to this. You do get answers, strange messages, unaccountable communications; but nothing is ever told, in any séance, which does not lie perdu in the breast of someone of the company. There is often no willing deception; peradventure, no fooling at all: but as you cannot draw water from a dry well, neither can you get a message except the germ of it broods within some soul with which you have some present contact.

And then, things being so, what advance can we make?

Many people seem to be unaware that to search after necromancers and soothsayers is forbidden by the English law. Consequently—let us say—a great number of cultivated ladies and gentlemen do, even in this intelligent age, resort to the homes of such folk; aye,

and consult them, too, eagerly, at the most critical junctures in their lives.

I know of a London washerwoman by trade who makes vastly more money by falling into trances than by her legitimate calling, to which she adds the letting of lodgings.

On one occasion she was commissioned to comment, in her swoon, on the truth or constancy of a girl's lover; an unopened letter from him being placed in her hands as she slept. She did comment on him, and truly. She said he was not true: that he did not love the girl really, that it was all a sham. Well, the power by which that clairvoyante spoke was the lurking distrust within the mind of the girl who stood by with an aching heart, listening to her doom. Also, perhaps, some virtue we know not of transfused itself subtilely from the paper upon which that perfidious one had breathed and written. Who can tell? But in any case the thing is all a snare and a delusion, and after much observation I can honestly say—I repeat this—that he or she who dabbles in these mysteries loses faith in God, and is apt to become a prey to the power of Evil.

And then the delusions, collusions, and hopeless entanglement of deceit mixed up with Spiritualism! How many tales I could tell—an I would!

There was a certain rich old gentleman in a great centre of trade and finance. The mediums had hope and every prospect he would make a will, or had made one, in their favour—endowing them and theirs with splendid and perpetual grants. This credulous searcher had advanced to the stage when doubt was terrible. He was ardent to convert others, and thereby strengthen his own fortress. He prevailed upon two clear-headed business men, brothers, to attend his séances. With reluctance, to do him a favour, they, after much difficulty, were induced to yield. Their host only wanted them, he said, to give the matter the unprejudiced attention they bestowed on—say—pig-iron.

There was no result whatever at the first sitting. The spirits were out of temper, obstinate, would not work. The disappointment was great, even to the novices, who had expected some fun at least. However, it was only an adjournment. The fun came next night.

All present sat round a table in a dark room, touching hands, with extended finger points. When the gas was turned up it was discovered that one of the unbelievers actually had a large bangle on his wrist. It had not been there before. Of course the spirits had slipped it on. He let this pass then. He had not the discourtesy to explain that a very pretty girl at his side had gently manœuvred it into its place. Her taper fingers were very soft and worked as spirits might.

This had gone off well, and better followed. Again the lights were lowered to the faintest glimmer. Soft music played. Forms floated through the air, now here, now there, plucking at a tambourine—

touching a sweet chord on the open piano. At last, in evil moment, the most angelic, sylph-like form came all too near our friend who wore the bangle. The temptation was too great for mortal man. He extended his arms and took firm, substantial, desperate hold of the nymph, at the same instant shouting wildly to his brother, "Turn up the gas, Jim."

The vulgar light revealed that the panting figure struggling from his grasp was that of his pretty neighbour who had slipped the bangle on his wrist. Strange to say, the giver of this spiritual feast never forgave those two brothers for their discourtesy.

But there are, as Hamlet says, real mysteries in this dull, prosaic life of ours. One or two true tales may not come amiss. I am quite ready to give any member of the Psychical Society chapter and verse and authorities, and every available data, if desired.

A certain barrister lost his wife a few years since. He was left with two little children to care for alone. London was no longer what it had been to him. He wished to make a home in the suburbs for his little boy and girl, and at last found one to his mind. He bought a villa near the river, in a pretty, country-like locality. The house was in bad repair, and he set workmen at it without delay. One day he took his children down with him while affairs were still in progress. They played about, while he sat writing in what was to be the library. Presently they ran to him. "Oh, papa! Mamma is out here!"

"Oh, no, my dears! Mamma is not there," he replied.

"But she is; indeed she is," they persisted. "She is at the end of the long passage. We saw her; but she would not let us go on. She waved us back."

To satisfy the children he must go with them. They led him to a long, dark corridor leading to back premises. "Ah, she is gone!" they cried in great disappointment. "Quite gone! But she *was* there, papa. She would not let us go on. Come, let us look for her."

"No, children; you wait here," he cried, moved by some sudden, cautious instinct. He went into the dusky passage, and, after a few steps, discovered that a trap-door leading to a deep cellar had been left open. Had the children run along here their destruction would have been almost certain.

Again, a tale of the late Bishop Wilberforce. So many tales of him have been current, but I do not believe that this has ever before gone abroad.

In early days he had a close friend, a school chum, a college companion; but about the time young Wilberforce took orders these two had a bitter and hopeless falling out. They never got over the disunion, and fell utterly apart. The chum became an extensive landowner, and was master of a charming house in the South of England.

Time passed on, and he grew elderly. He thought of making his

will. Being a great man, not only his solicitor but the solicitor's son arrived on the scene for the event. All three gentlemen were assembled in the library, a long room, with many windows running down almost to the ground. Suddenly the young man present saw a gentleman go by the first of these windows. The elder lawyer raised his head as the figure went by the second opening. Last of all the master of the house looked up.

"Why, that is Wilberforce," he exclaimed. "How many years it is since we fell out, and I dared him ever again to seek me out."

So saying, he ran to the hall-door to welcome his guest, towards whom no bitter feeling now remained in his mind. Strange to say, the Bishop was not at the door, nor could he be found within the grounds. At the moment of his appearance he had fallen from his horse in this neighbourhood and had been instantly killed.

ENLIGHTENMENT.

It was not in the lovely morning time
When dew lies bright on silent meadow-ways;
It was not in the splendid noon's high prime,
When all the lawns with sunlight are ablaze;
But in the tender twilight—ere the light
Of the broad moon made beautiful the night.

It was not in the freshness of my youth,
Nor when my manhood laughed in perfect power,
That first I tasted of immortal truth
And plucked the buds of the immortal flower.
But when my life had passed its noon, I found
The path that leads to the enchanted ground.

It was not love nor passion that made dear
That hour now memorable to us two;
Nothing was said the whole world might not hear,
Only—our souls touched, and for me and you,
Trees, flowers and sunshine, and the hearts of men,
Are better to be understood since then.

E. Nesbit.

THE SILENT CHIMES.

PLAYING AGAIN.

IT could not be said the Church Leet chimes brought good when they rang out that night at midnight, as the old year was giving place to the new. Mrs. Carradyne, in her superstition, thought they brought evil. Certainly evil set in at the same time, and Captain Monk, with all his scoffing obstinacy, could not fail to see it. That fine young lad, his son, fell through the window listening to them; and in the self-same hour the knowledge reached him that Katherine, his eldest and dearest child, had flown from his roof in defiant disobedience, to set up a home of her own.

Hubert was soon well of his bruises; but not of the cold induced by lying in the snow, clad only in his white nightshirt. In spite of all Mr. Speck's efforts, rheumatic fever set in, and for some time Hubert hovered between life and death. He recovered; but would never again be the strong, hearty lad he had been—though indeed he had never been very physically strong. The doctor privately hoped that the heart would be found all right in future, but he would not have answered for it.

The blow that told most on Captain Monk was that inflicted by Katherine. And surely never was disobedient marriage carried out with the impudent boldness of hers. Church Leet called it "cheek." Church Leet (disbelieving the facts when they first oozed out) could talk of nothing else for weeks. For Katherine had been married in the church hard by, that same night.

Special licenses were very uncommon things in those days; they cost too much; but the Reverend Thomas Dancox had procured one. With Katherine's money: everybody guessed that. She had four hundred a-year of her own, inherited from her dead mother, and full control over it. So the special license was secured, and their crafty plans were laid. The stranger who had presented himself at the Hall that night (by arrangement), asking for Mr. Dancox, thus affording an excuse for his quitting the banquet-room, was a young clergyman of Worcester, come over especially to marry them. When tackled with his deed afterwards, he protested that he had not been told the marriage was to be clandestine. Tom Dancox went out to him from the banquet; Katherine, slipping on a bonnet and shawl, joined them outside; they hastened to the rectory and thence into the church. And while the unconscious master of Leet Hall was entertaining his guests with his good cheer and his stories and his

hip, hip, hurrah, his Vicar and Katherine Monk were made one until death should them part. And death, as it proved, intended to do that speedily.

At first Captain Monk, in his unbounded rage, was for saying that a marriage celebrated at ten o'clock at night by the light of a solitary tallow candle, borrowed from the vestry, could not hold good. Re-assured upon this point, he strove to devise other means to part them. Foiled again, he laid the case before the Bishop of Worcester, and begged his lordship to unfrock Thomas Dancox. The Bishop did not do as much as that; though he sent for Tom Dancox and severely reprimanded him. But that, as Church Leet remarked, did not break bones. Tom had striven to make the best of his own cause to the Bishop, and the worst of Captain Monk's obdurate will; moreover, stolen marriages were not thought much of in those days.

An uncomfortable state of things was maintained all the year, Hall Leet and the Parsonage standing at daggers drawn. Never once did Captain Monk appear at church. If he by cross-luck met his daughter or her husband abroad, he struck into a good fit of swearing aloud; which perhaps relieved his mind. The chimes had never played again; they pertained to the church, and the church was in ill-favour with the Captain. As the end of the year approached, Church Leet wondered whether he would hold the annual banquet; but Captain Monk was not likely to forego that. Why should he? The invitations went out for it; and they contained an intimation that the chimes would again play.

The banquet took place, a neighbouring parson saying grace at it in the place of Tom Dancox. While the enjoyment was progressing and Captain Monk was expressing his marvel for the tenth time as to what could have become of Speck, who had not made his appearance, a note was brought in by Rimmer—just as he had brought in one last year. This also was from Mrs. Carradyne.

"*Please come out to me for one moment, dear Godfrey. I must say a word to you.*"

Captain Monk's first impulse on reading this was to send Rimmer back to say she might go and be hanged. But to call him from the table was so very extreme a measure, that on second thoughts he decided to go to her. Mrs. Carradyne was standing just outside the door, looking as white as a sheet.

"Well, this is pretty bold of you, Madam Emma," he began angrily. "Are you out of your senses?"

"Hush, Godfrey! Katherine is dying."

"What?" cried the Captain, the words confusing him.

"Katherine is dying," repeated his sister, her teeth chattering with emotion.

In spite of Katherine's rebellion, Godfrey Monk loved her still as

the apple of his eye; and it was only his obstinate temper which had kept him from reconciliation. His face took a hue of terror, and his voice a softer tone.

"What have you heard?"

"Her baby's born; something has gone wrong, I suppose, and she is dying. Sally ran up with the news, sent by Mr. Speck. Katherine is crying out for you, saying she cannot die without your forgiveness. Oh, Godfrey, you will go, you will surely go!" pleaded Mrs. Carradyne, breaking down with a burst of tears. "Poor Katherine!"

Never another word spoke he. He went out at the hall-door there and then, putting on his hat as he leaped down the steps. It was a wretched night; not white, clear, and cold as the last New Year's Eve had been, or mild and genial as the one before it; but damp, raw, misty.

"You think I have remained hard and defiant, father," Katherine whispered to him, "but I have many a time asked God's forgiveness on my bended knees; and I longed—oh, how I longed!—to ask yours. What should we all do with the weight of sin that lies on us when it comes to such an hour as this, but for Jesus Christ—for God's wonderful mercy!"

And, with one hand in her father's and the other in her husband's, both their hearts aching to pain, and their eyes wet with bitter tears, poor Katherine's soul passed away.

After quitting the parsonage, Captain Monk was softly closing the garden gate behind him—for when in sorrow we don't do things with a rush and a bang—when a whirring sound overhead caused him to start. Strong, hardened man though he was, his nerves were unstrung to-night in company with his heartstrings. It was the church clock preparing to strike twelve. The little doctor, Speck, who had left the house but a minute before, was standing at the churchyard fence close by, his arms leaning on the rails, probably ruminating sadly on what had just occurred. Captain Monk halted beside him in silence, while the clock struck.

As the last stroke vibrated on the air, telling the knell of the old year, the dawn of the new, another sound began.

Ring, ring, ring! Ring, ring, ring!

The chimes! The sweet, soothing, melodious chimes, carolling forth the Bay of Biscay. Very pleasant were they in themselves to the ear. But—did they fall pleasantly on Captain Monk's? It may be, not. It may be, a wish came over him that he had never thought of instituting them. But for doing that, the ills of his recent life had never had place. George West's death would not have lain at his door, or room been made by it for Tom Dancox, and Katherine would not be lying as he had now left her—cold and lifeless.

"Could *nothing* have been done to save her, Speck?" he whispered to the doctor, whose arms were still on the churchyard

railings, listening to the chimes in silence—though indeed he had asked the same question indoors before.

"Nothing; or you may be sure, sir, it would have been," answered Mr. Speck. "Had all the medical men in Worcestershire been about her, they could not have saved her any more than I could. These unfortunate cases happen now and then," sighed he, "showing us how powerless we really are."

Well, it was grievous news wherewith to startle the parish. And Mrs. Carradyne, a martyr to belief in ghosts and omens, grew to dread the chimes with a nervous and nameless dread.

II.

It was but the first of February, yet the weather might have served for May-day: one of those superb days that come once in a while out of their season, serving to remind the world that the dark, depressing, dreary winter will not last for ever; though we may have half feared it means to, forgetting the reassuring promise of the Divine Ruler of all things, given after the Flood:

"*While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.*"

The warm and glorious sunbeams lay on Church Leet, as if to woo the bare hedges into verdant life, the cold fields to smiling plains. Even the mounds of the graveyard, interspersed amidst the old tombstones, looked green and cheerful to-day in the golden light.

Turning slowly out of the Vicarage gate came a good-looking clergyman of seven-or-eight-and-twenty. A slender man of middle height, with a sweet expression on his pale, thoughtful face, and dark earnest eyes. It was the new Vicar of Church Leet, the Reverend Robert Grame.

For a goodish many years have gone on since that tragedy of poor Katherine's death, and this is the second appointed Vicar since that inauspicious time.

Mr. Grame walked across the churchyard, glancing at the inscriptions on the tombs. Inside the church porch stood the clerk, old John Cale, keys in hand. Mr. Grame saw him and quickened his pace.

"Have I kept you waiting, Cale?" he cried in his pleasant, considerate tones. "I am sorry for that."

"Not at all, your reverence; I came afore the time. This here church is but a step or two off my home, yonder, and I'm as often out here as I be indoors," continued John Cale, a fresh-coloured little man with pale grey eyes and white hair. "I've been clerk here, sir, for seven-and-thirty years."

"You've seen more than one parson out then, I reckon."

"More than one! Ay, sir, more than—more than six times one, I was going to say; but that's too much, maybe. Let's see: there

was Mr. Cartright, he had held the living I hardly know how many years when I came, and he held it for many after that. Mr. West succeeded him—the Reverend George West; then came Thomas Dancox; then Mr. Atterley: four in all. And now you've come, sir, to make the fifth."

"Did they all die? or take other livings?"

"Some the one thing, sir, and some the other. Mr. Cartright died, he was old; and Mr. West, he—he——" John Cale hesitated before he went on——"he died; Mr. Dancox got appointed to a chaplaincy somewhere over the seas; he was here but about eighteen months, hardly that; and Mr. Atterley, who has just left, has had a big church with a big income, they say, given to him over in Oxfordshire."

"Which makes room for me," smiled Robert Grame.

They were inside the church now; a small and very old-fashioned church, with high pews, dark and sombre. Over the large pew of the Monks, standing sideways to the pulpit, sundry slabs were on the wall, their inscriptions testifying to the virtues and ages of the Monk family dead and gone. Mr. Grame stood to read them. One slab of white marble, its black letters fresh and clear, caught especially his eye.

"Katherine, eldest child of Godfrey Monk, gentleman, and wife of the Reverend Thomas Dancox," he read out aloud. "Was that he who was Vicar here?"

"Ay, 'twas. She married him again her father's wish, and died, poor thing, just a year after it," replied the clerk. "And only twenty-three, as you see, sir! The Captain came down and forgave her on her dying bed, and 'twas he that had the stone put up there. Her baby-girl was taken to the Hall, and is there still: ten years old she must be now; 'twas but an hour or two old when the mother died."

"It seems a sad history," observed Mr. Grame as he turned away to enter the vestry.

John Cale did the honours of its mysteries; showing him the chest for the surplices; the cupboard let into the wall for the register-book; the place where candles and such-like stores were kept. Mr. Grame opened a door at one end of the room and saw a square flagged place, containing grave-digging tools and the hanging ropes of the bell which called people to church. Shutting the door again, he crossed to a door on the opposite side. But that he could not open.

"What does this lead to?" he asked. "It is locked."

"It's always kept locked, that door is, sir; and it's a'most as much as my post is worth to open it," said the clerk, his voice sinking to a mysterious whisper. "It leads up to the chimes."

"The chimes!" echoed the new parson in surprise. "Do you mean to say this little country church can boast of chimes?"

John Cale nodded. "Lovely, pleasant things they be to listen to,

sir, but we've not heard 'em since the midnight when Miss Katherine died. They play a tune called 'The Bay of Biscay.'"

Selecting a key from the bunch that he carried in his hand, he opened the door, displaying a narrow staircase, unprotected as a ladder and nearly perpendicular. At its top was another small door, evidently locked.

"Captain Monk had all this done when he put the chimes up," remarked he. "I sweep the dust off these stairs, once in three months or so, but otherwise the door's not opened. And that one," nodding to the door above, "never."

"But why?" asked the clergyman. "If the chimes are there, and are, as you say, melodious, why do they not play?"

"Well, sir, I b'lieve there's a bit of superstition at the bottom of it," returned the clerk, not caring to explain too fully lest he should have to tell about Mr. West's death, which might not be the thing to frighten a new Vicar with. "A feeling has somehow got abroad in the parish (leastways with a many of its folk) that the putting-up of its bells brought ill-luck, and that whenever the chimes ring out some dreadful evil falls on the Monk family."

"I never heard of such a thing," exclaimed the Vicar, hardly knowing whether to laugh or lecture. "The parish cannot be so ignorant as that! How can the putting-up of chimes bring ill-luck?"

"Well, your reverence, I don't know; the thing's beyond me. They were heard but three times, ringing in the new year at midnight, three years, one on top of t'other—and each time some ill fell."

"My good man—and I am sure you are good—you should know better," remonstrated Mr. Grame. "Captain Monk cannot, surely, give credence to this?"

"No, sir; but his sister up at the Hall does—Mrs. Carradyne. It's said the Captain used to ridicule her finely for it; he'd fly into a passion whenever 'twas alluded to. Captain Monk, as a brave seaman, is too bold to tolerate anything of the sort. But he has never let the chimes play since his daughter died. He was coming out from the death-scene at midnight, when the chimes broke forth the third year, and it's said he can't abear the sound of 'em since."

"That may well be," assented Mr. Grame.

"And finding, sir, year after year, year after year, as one year gives place to another, that they are never heard, we have got to call 'em amid ourselves, the Silent Chimes," spoke the clerk, as they turned to leave the church. "The Silent Chimes, sir."

Clinking his keys, the clerk walked away to his home, an ivy-covered cottage not a stone's-throw off; the clergyman lingered in the churchyard, reading the memorials on the tombstones. He was smiling at the quaintness of some of them, when the sound of hasty footsteps caused him to turn. A little girl was climbing over the churchyard-railings (as being nearer to her than the entrance-gate), and came dashing towards him across the gravestones.

"Are you grandpapa's new parson?" asked the young lady; a pretty child of ten, with a dark skin, and dusky-violet eyes staring at him freely out of a saucy face.

"Yes, I am," said he. "What is your name?"

"What is yours?" boldly questioned she. "They've talked about you at home, but I forgot it."

"Mine is Robert Grame. Won't you tell me yours?"

"Oh, it's Kate.—Here's that wicked Lucy coming! She's going to groan at me for jumping here. She says it's not reverent."

A charming young lady of some twenty years was coming up the path. She wore a scarlet cloak, its hood lined with white silk; a straw hat shaded her fair face, blushing very much just now; in her dark-grey eyes might be read vexation, as she addressed Mr. Grame.

"I hope Kate has not been rude? I hope you will excuse her heedlessness in this place. She is but a little girl."

"It's only the new parson, Lucy," broke in Kate without ceremony. "He says his name's Robert Grame."

"Oh, Kate, don't! How shall we ever teach you manners?" reprimanded the young lady in much distress. "She has been greatly indulged, sir," turning to the clergyman.

"I can well understand that," he said, with a bright smile. "I presume that I have the honour of speaking to the daughter of my patron—Captain Monk?"

"No; Captain Monk is my uncle: I am Lucy Carradyne."

As the young clergyman stood, hat in hand, a feeling came over him that he had never seen so sweet a face as the one he was looking at. Miss Lucy Carradyne was saying to herself, "What a nice countenance he has! What kindly, earnest eyes!"

"This little lady tells me her name is Kate."

"Kate Dancox," said Lucy, as the child danced away. "Her mamma was Captain Monk's eldest daughter; she died when Kate was born. My uncle is very fond of Kate; he will hardly have her controlled at all."

"I have been in to see my church! John Cale has been doing its honours for me," smiled Mr. Grame. "It is a pretty little edifice."

"Yes, and I hope you will like it; I hope you will like the parish," frankly returned Lucy.

"I shall be sure to do that, I think. As soon, at least, as I can feel convinced that it is to be really mine," he added, with a quaint expression. "When I heard, a week ago, that Captain Monk had presented me—an entire stranger to him—with the living of Church Leet, I could not believe it. It is not often that a nameless curate, without influence, is spontaneously remembered."

"It is not much of a living," said Lucy, meeting the words half estingly. "Worth, I believe, but about a hundred and sixty pounds a-year."

"But that is a great rise for me—and I have a house to myself

large and beautiful—and am a Vicar and no longer a curate," he returned, laughingly. "I cannot *imagine*, though, how Captain Monk came to give it me. Have you any idea how it was, Miss Carradyne?"

Lucy's face flushed. She could not tell this gentleman the truth: that another clergyman had been fixed upon, one who would have been especially welcome to the parishioners; that Captain Monk had all but nominated him to the living. But it chanced to reach the Captain's ears that this clergyman had expressed his intention of holding the Communion Service monthly, instead of quarterly as heretofore, so he put the question to him. Finding it to be true, he withdrew his promise; he would not have old customs broken in upon by modern innovation, he said; and forthwith he appointed the Reverend Robert Grame.

"I do not even know how Captain Monk heard of me," continued Mr. Grame, marking Lucy's hesitation.

"I believe you were recommended to him by one of the clergy attached to Worcester Cathedral," said Lucy.——"And I think I must wish you good-morning now."

But there came an interruption. A tall, stately, haughty young woman, with an angry look upon her dark and handsome face, had entered the churchyard, and was calling out as she advanced:

"That monkey broken loose again, I suppose, and at her pranks here! What are you good for, Lucy, if you cannot keep her in better order? You know I told you to go straight on to Mrs. Speck, and——"

The words died away. Mr. Grame, who had been hidden by a large upright tombstone, emerged into view. Lucy, with another blush, spoke to cover the awkwardness.

"This is Miss Monk," she said to him. "Eliza, it is the new clergyman, Mr. Grame."

Miss Monk recovered her equanimity. A winning smile supplanted the anger on her face; she held out her hand, grandly gracious. For she liked the stranger's look: he was beyond doubt a gentleman—and an attractive man.

"Allow me to welcome you to Church Leet, Mr. Grame. My father chances to be absent to-day; he is gone to Evesham."

"So the clerk told me, or I should have called this morning to pay my respects to him, and to thank him for his generous and most unexpected patronage of me. I got here last night," concluded Mr. Grame, standing uncovered as when he had saluted Lucy. Eliza Monk liked his pleasant voice, his taking manners: her fancy went out to him there and then.

"But though papa is absent, you will walk up with me now to the Hall to make acquaintance with my aunt, Mrs. Carradyne," said Eliza, in those tones that, gracious though they were, sounded in the light of a command—just as poor Katherine's had always sounded. And Mr. Grame went with her.

But now—handsome though she was, gracious though she meant to be—there was something about Eliza Monk that seemed to repulse Robert Grame, rather than attract him. Lucy had fascinated him; she repelled. Other people had experienced the same kind of repulsion, but knew not where it lay.

Hubert, the heir, about twenty-five now, came forward to greet the stranger as they entered the Hall. No repulsion about *him*. Robert Grame's hand met his with a warm clasp. A young man of gentle manners and a face of rare beauty—but oh, so suspiciously delicate! Perhaps it was the extreme slenderness of the frame, the wan look in the refined features and their bright hectic that drew forth the clergyman's sympathy. An impression came over him that this young man was not long for earth.

"Is Mr. Monk strong?" he presently asked of Mrs. Carradyne, when Hubert had temporarily quitted the room.

"Indeed, no. He had rheumatic fever some years ago," she added, "and has never been strong since."

"Has he heart disease?" questioned the clergyman. He thought the young man had just that look.

"We fear his heart is weak," replied Mrs. Carradyne.

"But that may be only your fancy, you know, Aunt Emma," spoke Miss Monk reproachfully. She and her father were both passionately attached to Hubert; they resented any doubt cast upon his health.

"Oh, of course," assented Mrs. Carradyne, who never resented anything.

"We shall be good friends, I trust," said Eliza, with a beaming smile, as her hand lay in Mr. Grame's when he was leaving.

"Indeed I hope so," he answered. "Why not?"

III.

SUMMER lay upon the land. The landscape stretched out before Leet Hall was fair to look upon. A fine expanse of wood and dale, of trees in their luxuriant beauty; of emerald-green plains, of meandering streams, of patches of growing corn already putting on its yellow hue, and of the golden sunlight, soon to set and gladden other worlds, that shone from the deep-blue sky. Birds sang in their leafy shelters, bees were drowsily humming as they gathered the last of the day's honey, and butterflies flitted from flower to flower with a good-night kiss.

At one of the windows stood, in her haughty beauty, Eliza Monk. Not, surely, of the lovely scene before her was she thinking, or her face might have worn a more pleasing expression. Rather did she seem to gaze, and with displeasure, at two or three people who were walking in the distance: Lucy Carradyne side by side with the clergyman, and Miss Kate Dancox pulling at his coat-tails.

"Shameful flirt!"

The acidity of the tone was so pronounced that Mrs. Carradyne, seated near and busy at her netting, lifted her head in surprise. "Why, Eliza, what's the matter? Who is a flirt?"

"Lucy," curtly replied Eliza, pointing with her finger.

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Carradyne, after glancing outwards.

"Why does she persistently lay herself out to attract that man?" was the passionate rejoinder.

"Be silent, Eliza. How can you conjure up so unjust a charge? Lucy is not capable of *laying herself out* to attract anyone. It lies but in your imagination."

"Day after day, when she is out with Kate, you may see him join her—allured to her side."

"The 'allurer' is Kate, then. I am surprised at you, Eliza: you might be talking of a servant-maid. Kate has taken a liking for Mr. Grame, and she runs after him at all times and seasons."

"She ought to be stopped, then."

"Stopped! Will you undertake to do it? Could her mother be stopped in anything she pleased to do? And the child has the same rebellious will."

"I say that Robert Grame's attraction is Lucy."

"It may be so," acknowledged Mrs. Carradyne. "But the attraction must lie in Lucy herself; not in anything she does. Some suspicion of the sort has, at times, crossed me."

She looked at them again as she spoke. They were sauntering onwards slowly; Mr. Grame bending towards Lucy, and talking earnestly. Kate, dancing about, pulling at his arm or his coat, appeared to get but little attention. Mrs. Carradyne quietly went on with her work.

And that composed manner, combined with her last sentence, brought gall and wormwood to Eliza Monk.

Throwing a summer scarf upon her shoulders, Eliza passed out at the French window, crossed the terrace, and set out to confront the conspirators. But she was not in time. Seeing her coming, or not seeing her—who knew?—Mr. Grame turned off with a fleet foot towards his home. So nobody remained for Miss Monk to waste her angry breath upon but Lucy. The breath was keenly sharp, and Lucy fell to weeping.

"I am here, Grame. Don't go in."

The words fell on the clergyman's ears as he closed the Vicarage gate behind him, and was passing up the path to his door. Turning his head, he saw Hubert Monk seated on the bench under the May tree, pink and lovely yet. "How long have you been here?" he asked, sitting down beside him.

"Ever so long; waiting for you," replied Hubert.

"I was but strolling about."

"I saw you: with Lucy and the child."

They had become fast and firm friends, these two young men; and the minister was insensibly exercising a wonderful influence over Hubert for good. Believing—as he did believe—that Hubert's days were numbered, that any sharp extra exertion might entail fatal consequences, he gently strove, as opportunity offered, to lead his thoughts to the Better Land.

"What an evening it is!" rapturously exclaimed Hubert.

"Ay: so calm and peaceful."

The rays of the setting sun touched Hubert's face, lighting up its extreme delicacy; the scent of the closing flowers filled the still air with its sweetness; the birds were chanting their evening song of praise. Hubert, his elbow on the arm of the bench, his hand supporting his chin, looked out with dreamy eyes.

"What book have you there?" asked Mr. Grame, noticing one in his other hand.

"Herbert," answered the young man, showing it. "I filched it from your table through the open window, Grame."

The clergyman took it. It chanced to open at a passage he was very fond of. Or perhaps he knew the place, and opened it purposely.

"Do you know these verses, Hubert? They are appropriate enough just now, while those birds are carolling."

"I can't tell. What verses? Read them."

"Hark, how the birds do sing,
And woods do ring!
All creatures have their joy, and man hath his,
Yet, if we rightly measure,
Man's joy and pleasure
Rather hereafter than in present is.

Not that we may not here
Taste of the cheer;
But as birds drink and straight lift up the head,
So must he sip and think
Of better drink
He may attain to after he is dead."

"Ay," said Hubert, breaking the silence after a time, "it's very true, I suppose. But this world—oh, it's worth living for. Will anything in the next, Grame, be more beautiful than *that?*"

He was pointing to the sunset. It was marvellously and unusually beautiful. Lovely pink and crimson clouds flecked the west; in their midst shone a golden light of dazzling refulgence, too glorious to look upon.

"One might fancy it the portals of heaven," said the clergyman; "the golden gate of entrance, leading to the pearly gates within, and to the glittering walls of precious stones."

"And—why! it seems to take the form of an entrance-gate!"

exclaimed Hubert in excitement. For it really did. "Look at it! Oh, Grame, surely, surely the very gate of Heaven cannot be more dazzlingly beautiful than that!"

"And if the gate of entrance is so unspeakably beautiful, what will the City itself be?" murmured Mr. Grame: "The Heavenly City! the New Jerusalem!"

"It is beginning to fade," said Hubert presently, as they sat watching; "the brightness is going. What a pity!"

"All that's bright must fade in this world, you know; and fade very quickly. Hubert! it will not in the next."

Church Leet, watching its neighbours' doings sharply, began to whisper that the new clergyman, Mr.Grame, was likely to cause unpleasantness to the Monk family, just as some of his predecessors had caused it. For no man having eyes in his head (still less any woman) could fail to see that the Captain's imperious daughter had fallen desperately in love with him. Would there be a second elopement, as in the days of Tom Dancox? Would Eliza Monk set her father at defiance, as Katherine did?

One of the last to see signs and tokens, though they took place under her open eyes, was Mrs. Carradyne. But she saw at last. The clergyman could not walk across a new-mown field, or down a shady lane, or be hastening along the dusty turnpike road, but by some inexplicable coincidence he would be met by Miss Monk; and when he came to the Hall to pass an hour with Hubert, she generally made a third at the interview. It had pleased her latterly to take to practising on the old church organ; and if Mr. Grame was not wiled into the church with her and her attendant, the ancient clerk, who blew the bellows, she was sure to alight upon him in going or returning.

One fine evening, dinner over, when the last beams of the sun were slanting into the drawing-room, Eliza Monk was sitting back on a sofa, reading; Kate romped about the room, and Mrs. Carradyne had just rung the bell for tea. Lucy had been spending the afternoon with Mrs. Speck, and Hubert had now gone to fetch her home.

"Good gracious, Kate, can't you be quiet!" exclaimed Miss Monk, as the child in her gambols sprung upon the sofa, upsetting the book and its reader's temper. "Go away: you are treading on my flounces. Aunt Emma, why do you persist in having this tiresome little reptile with us after dinner?"

"Because your father will not let her be sent to the nursery," said Mrs. Carradyne.

"Did you ever know a child like her?"

"She is but as her mother was; as you were, Eliza—always rebellious. Kate, sit down to the piano and play one of your pretty tunes."

"I won't," responded Kate. "Play yourself, Aunt Emma."

Dashing through the open glass doors, Kate began tossing a ball on the broad gravel walk below the terrace. Mrs. Carradyne cautioned her not to break the windows, and turned to the tea-table.

"Don't make the tea yet, Aunt Emma," interrupted Miss Monk, in a tone that was quite like a command. "Mr. Grame is coming, and he won't care for cold tea."

Mrs. Carradyne returned to her seat. She thought the opportunity had come to say something to her niece which she had been wanting to say.

"You invited Mr. Grame, Eliza?"

"I did," said Eliza, looking defiance.

"My dear," resumed Mrs. Carradyne with some hesitation, "forgive me if I offer you a word of advice. You have no mother; I pray you to listen to me in her stead. You must change your line of behaviour to Mr. Grame."

Eliza's dark face turned red and haughty. "I do not understand you, Aunt Emma."

"Nay, I think you do understand me, my dear. You have incautiously allowed yourself to fall into—into an undesirable liking for Mr. Grame. An *unseemly* liking, Eliza."

"Unseemly!"

"Yes; because it has not been sought. Cannot you see, Eliza, how he instinctively recedes from it? how he would repel it were he less the gentleman than he is? Child, I shrink from saying these things to you, but it is needful. You have good sense, Eliza, keen discernment, and you might see for yourself that it is not to you Mr. Grame's love is given—or ever will be."

For once in her life Eliza Monk allowed herself to betray agitation. She opened her trembling lips to speak, but closed them again.

"A moment yet, Eliza. Let us suppose, for argument's sake, that Mr. Grame loved you; that he wished to marry you; you know, my dear, how utterly useless it would be. Your father would not suffer it."

"Mr. Grame is of gentle descent; my father is attached to him," disputed Eliza.

"But Mr. Grame has nothing but his living—a hundred and sixty pounds a-year; *you* must make a match in accordance with your own position. It would be Katherine's trouble, Katherine's rebellion over again. But this was mentioned for argument's sake only; Mr. Grame will never sue for anything of the kind; and I must beg of you, my dear, to put all idea of it away, and to change your manner towards him."

"Perhaps you fancy he may wish to sue for Lucy!" cried Eliza, fierce resentment.

"That is a great deal more likely than the other. And the difficulties in her case would not be so great."

"And pray why, Aunt Emma?"

"Because, my dear, I should not resent it as your father would. I am not so ambitious for her as he is for you."

"A fine settlement for her—Robert Grame and his hundred ——"

"Who is taking my name in vain?" cried out a pleasant voice from the open window; and Robert Grame entered.

"I was," said Eliza readily; her tone changing like magic to sweet suavity, her face putting on its best charm—"About to remark that the Reverend Robert Grame has a hundred faults. Aunt Emma agrees with me."

He laughed lightly, regarding it as pleasantry, and inquired for Hubert.

Eliza stepped out on the terrace when tea was over, talking to Mr. Grame; they began to pace it slowly together. Kate and her ball sported on the gravel walk beneath. It was a warm, serene evening, the silver moon shining, the evening star just appearing in the clear blue sky.

"Lucy being away, you cannot enjoy your usual flirtation with her," remarked Miss Monk, in a light tone.

But he did not take it lightly. Rarely had his voice been more serious than when he answered: "I beg your pardon. I do not flirt—I have never flirted with Miss Carradyne."

"No! It has looked like it."

Mr. Grame remained silent. "I hope not," he said at last. "I did not intend—I did not think. However, I must mend my manners," he added more gaily. "To flirt at all would ill become my sacred calling. And Lucy Carradyne is superior to any such trifling."

Her pulses were coursing on to fever heat. With her whole heart she loved Robert Grame: and the secret preference he had unconsciously betrayed for Lucy had served to turn her later days to bitterness.

"Possibly you mean something more serious," said Eliza, compressing her lips.

"If I mean anything, I should certainly mean it seriously," replied the young clergyman, his face blushing as he made the avowal. "But I may not. I have been reflecting much latterly, and I see I may not. If my income were good it might be a different matter. But it is not; and marriage for me must be out of the question."

"With a portionless girl, yes. Robert Grame," she went on rapidly with impassioned earnestness, "when you marry, it must be with someone who can help you; whose income will compensate for the deficiency of yours. Look around you well: there may be some young ladies rich in the world's wealth, even in Church Leet, who will forget your want of fortune for your own sake."

Did he misunderstand her? It was hardly possible. She had a large fortune; Lucy none. But he answered as though he comprehended not. It may be that he deemed it best to set her ill-regulated hopes at rest for ever.

"One can hardly suppose a temptation of that kind would fall in the way of an obscure individual like myself. If it did, I could but reject it. I should not marry for money. I shall never marry where I do not love."

They had halted near one of the terrace seats. On it lay a toy of Kate's, a little wooden "box of bells." Mechanically, her mind far away, Eliza took it up and began, still mechanically, turning the wire which set the bells to play with a soft but not unpleasant jingle.

"You love Lucy Carradyne!" she whispered.

"I fear I do," he answered. "Though I have struggled against the conviction."

A sudden crash startled them; shivers of glass fell before their feet; fit accompaniment to the shattered hopes of one who stood there. Kate Dancox, aiming at Mr. Grame's hat, had sent her ball through the window. He leaped away to catch the culprit, and Eliza Monk sat down on the bench, all gladness gone out of her. Her love-dream had turned out to be a snare and a delusion.

"Who did that?"

Captain Monk, frightened from his after-dinner nap by the crash, came forth in anger. Kate got a box on the ear, and was sent to bed howling.

"You should send her to school, papa."

"And I will," declared the Captain. "She startled me out of my sleep. Out of a dream, too. And it is not often I dream. I thought I was hearing the chimes."

"Chimes which I have not yet been fortunate enough to hear," said Mr. Grame with a smile. Eliza recalled the sound of the bells she had set in motion, and thought it must have penetrated to her father in his sleep.

"By George, no! You shall, though, Grame. They shall ring the new year in when it comes."

"Aunt Emma won't like that," laughingly commented Eliza. She was trying to be gay and careless before Robert Grame.

"Aunt Emma may *dis*like it!" retorted the Captain. "She has picked up some ridiculously absurd notion, Grame, that the bells bring ill-luck when they are heard. Women are so foolishly superstitious."

"That must be a very far-fetched superstition," said the parson.

"One might as well believe in witches," mocked the Captain. "I have given in to her fancies for some years, not to cross her, and let the bells be silent: she's a good woman on the whole; but be hanged if I will any longer. On the last day of this year, Grame, you shall hear the chimes."

How it came about nobody exactly knew, unless it was through Hubert, but matters were smoothed for the parson and Lucy.

Mrs. Carradyne knew his worth, and she saw that they were as much in love with one another as ever could be Hodge and Joan. She liked the idea of Lucy being settled near her—and the vicarage, large and handsome, could have its unused rooms opened and furnished. Mr. Grame honestly avowed that he should have asked for Lucy before, but for his poverty; he supposed that Lucy was poor also.

"That is so; Lucy has nothing of her own," said Mrs. Carradyne to this. "But I am not in that condition."

"Of course not. But—pardon me—I thought your property went to your son."

Mrs. Carradyne laughed. "A small estate of his father's, close by here, became my son's at his father's death," she said. "My own money is at my disposal; the half of it will eventually be Lucy's. When she marries, I shall allow her two hundred a-year: and upon that, and your stipend, you will have to get along together."

"It will be like riches to me," said the young parson all in a glow.

"Ah! Wait until you realise the outlets for money that a wife entails," nodded Mrs. Carradyne in her superior wisdom. "Not but that I'm sure it's good for young people, setting-up together, to be straitened at the beginning. It teaches them economy and the value of money."

Altogether it seemed a wonderful prospect to Robert Grame. Miss Lucy thought it would be Paradise. But a stern wave of opposition set in from Captain Monk.

Hubert broke the news to him as they were sitting together after dinner. To begin with, the Captain, as a matter of course, flew into a passion.

"Another of those beggarly parsons! What possessed them, that they should fix upon *his* family to play off their machinations upon! Lucy Carradyne was his niece: she should never be grabbed up by one of them while he was alive to stop it."

"Wait a minute, father," whispered Hubert. "You like Robert Grame; I know that: you would rather see him carry off Lucy than Eliza."

"What the dickens do you mean by that?"

Hubert said a few cautious words—hinting that, but for Lucy's being in the way, poor Katherine's escapade might have been enacted over again. Captain Monk relieved his mind by some strong language, sailor fashion; and for once in his life saw he must give in to necessity.

So the wedding was fixed for the month of February, just one year after they had met: that sweet time of early spring, when spring comes in genially, when the birds would be singing, and the green buds peeping and the sunlight dancing.

But the present year was not over yet. Lucy was sewing at her wedding things. Eliza Monk, smarting at their sight as with an

adder's sting, ran away from it to visit a family who lived near Oddingly, an insignificant little place, lying, as everybody knows, on the other side of Worcester, famous only for its dulness and for the strange murders committed there in 1806—which have since passed into history. But she returned home for Christmas.

Once more it was old-fashioned Christmas weather; Jack Frost freezing the snow and sporting his icicles. The hearty tenants, wending their way to the annual feast in the winter twilight, said how unusually sharp the air was, enough to bite off their ears and noses.

The Reverend Robert Grame made one at the table for the first time, and said grace at the Captain's elbow. He had heard about the freedom obtaining at these dinners; but he knew he was utterly powerless to suppress it, and he hoped his presence might prove some little restraint, just as poor George West had hoped in the days gone by: not that it was as bad now as it used to be. A rumour had gone abroad that the chimes were to play again, but it died away unconfirmed, for Captain Monk kept his own counsel.

The first to quit the table was Hubert. Captain Monk looked up angrily. He was proud of his son, of his tall and graceful form, of his handsome features, proud even of his bright complexion; ay, and of his estimable qualities. While inwardly fearing Hubert's signs of fading strength, he defiantly refused to recognise it or to admit it openly.

"What now?" he said in a loud whisper. "Are *you* turning renegade?"

The young man bent over his father's shoulder. "I don't feel well; better let me go quietly, father; I have felt oppressed here all day"—touching his left side. And he escaped.

There was present at table an elderly gentleman named Peveril. He had recently come with his wife into the neighbourhood and taken on lease a small estate, called by the odd name of Peacock's Range, which belonged to Hubert and lay between Church Dykely and Church Leet. Mr. Peveril put an inopportune question.

"What is the story, Captain, about some chimes which were put up in the church here and are never allowed to ring because they caused the death of the Vicar? I was told of it to-day."

Captain Monk looked at Mr. Peveril, but did not speak.

"One George West, I think. Was he parson here?"

"Yes, he was parson here," said Farmer Winter, finding nobody else answered Mr. Peveril, next to whom he sat. He was a very old man now, but hale and hearty still, and a steadfast ally of his landlord. "Given that parson his way and we should never have had the chimes put up. Sweet sounding bells they are."

"But how could the chimes kill him?" went on Mr. Peveril. "Did they kill him?"

"George West was a quarrelsome, mischief-making meddler, good for nothing but to set the parish together by the ears; and I must

beg of you to drop his name when at my table, Peveril. As to the chimes, you will hear them to-night."

Captain Monk spoke in his sternest tones, and Mr. Peveril bowed. Robert Grame had listened in surprise. He wondered what it all meant—for nobody had ever told him of this phase of the past. The table clapped its unsteady hands and gave a cheer for the chimes, now to be heard again.

"Yes, gentlemen," said the Captain, not a whit more steady than his guests. "They shall ring for us to-night, though it brought the parson out of his grave."

A few minutes before twelve the butler, who had his orders, came into the dining-room and set the windows open. His master gave him another order and the man withdrew. Entering the drawing-room, he proceeded to open those windows also. Mr. Peveril, and one or two more guests, sat with the family; Hubert lay back in an easy-chair.

"What are you about, Rimmer?" hastily cried out Mrs. Carradyne in surprise. "Opening the windows!"

"It is by the master's orders, ma'am," replied the butler; "he bade me open them, that you and the ladies might get a better hearing of the chimes."

Mrs. Carradyne, superstitious ever, grew white as death. "*The chimes!*" she breathed in a dread whisper. "Surely, surely, Rimmer, you must be mistaken. The chimes cannot be going to ring again!"

"They are to ring the New Year in," said the man. "I have known it this day or two, but was not allowed to tell, as Madam may guess"—glancing at his mistress. "John Cale has got his orders, and he'll set 'em going when the clock has struck twelve."

"Oh, is there no one who will run to stop it?" bewailed Mrs. Carradyne, wringing her hands in all the terror of a nameless fear. "There may yet be time. Rimmer! can you go?"

Hubert came out of his chair laughing. Rimmer was round and fat now, and could not run if he tried. "I'll go, aunt," he said. "Why, walking slowly, I should get there before Rimmer."

The words, "walking slowly," may have misled Mrs. Carradyne; or, in the moment's tribulation, perhaps she forgot that Hubert ought not to be the one to use much exertion; but she made no objection. No one else made way, and Hubert hastened out, putting on his overcoat as he went towards the church.

It was the loveliest night; the air was still and clear, the landscape white and glistening, the moon bright as gold. Hubert, striding along at a quick walk, had traversed half the short distance, when the church clock struck out the first note of midnight. And he knew he should not be in time—unless——

He set off to run: it was such a very little way! Flying along without heed to self, he reached the churchyard gate. And there he was forced—forced—to stop to gather up his laboured breath.

Ring, ring, ring! broke forth the chimes melodiously upon Hubert's ear. "Stop!" he shouted, panting; "stop! stop!"—just as if John Cale could hear the warning: and he began leaping over all the gravestones in his path, after the irreverent fashion of Miss Kate Dancox.

"Stop!" he faintly cried in his exhaustion, dashing through the vestry, as the strains of "The Bay of Biscay" pursued their harmonious course overhead, sounding louder here than in the open air. "Sto——"

He could not finish the word. Pulling the little door open, he put his foot on the first step of the narrow ladder of a staircase: and then fell prone upon it. John Cale and young Mr. Threpp, the churchwarden's son, who had been the clerk's companion, were descending the stairs, after the chimes had chimed themselves out, and they had locked them up again to (perhaps) another year, when they found some impediment below.

"What is it?" exclaimed young Mr. Threpp. The clerk turned on his lantern.

It was Hubert, Captain Monk's son and heir. He lay there with a face of deadly whiteness, a blue shade encircling his lips.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

WINTER IN ABSENCE.

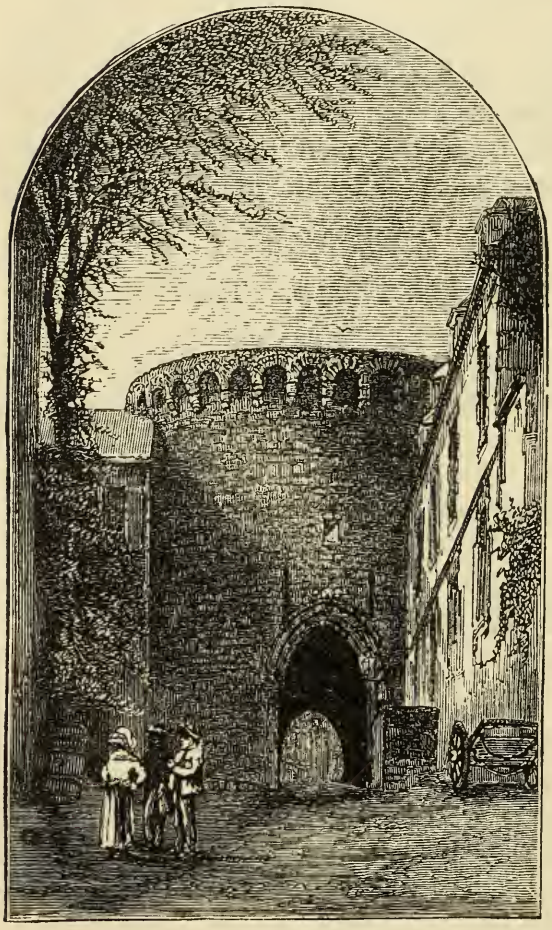
THE earth is clothed with fog and mist,
The shrivelled ferns are white with rime,
The trees are fairy-frosted round
The portion of enchanted ground
Where, in the woods, we lovers kissed
Last summer, in the happy time.

They say that summer comes again;
In winter who believes it true?
Can I have faith through days like this—
Days with no rose, no sun, no kiss,
Faith in the long gold summer when
There will be sunshine, flowers and you?

Keep faith and me alive, I pray;
Feed me with loving letters, dear;
Speak of the summer and the sun;
Lest, when the winter-time be done,
Your summer shall have fled away
With me—who had no heart to stay
The slow, sick turning of the year.

THE BRETONS AT HOME.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.



Gateway, Dinan.

MORLAIX awoke to a new day. The sunshine was pouring upon it from a cloudless sky — a somewhat rare vision in Brittany, where the skies are more often grey, rain frequently falls, and the land is overshadowed by mist.

So far the climate of Brittany resembles very much that of England: and many other points of comparison exist between Greater Britain and Lesser Brittany besides its similarity of name. For even its name it derives from us; from the fact that in the fifth and sixth centuries the Saxons, as they choose to call them, went over in great numbers and settled there. No wonder, then, that the Bretons possess many of our characteristics, even in exaggeration, for they are direct descendants of the ancient Britons.

They have, for instance, all the gravity of the English temperament, to which is added a gloom or sombreness of disposition that is born of repression and poverty and a long struggle with the ways and means of existence; to which may yet farther be added the influence of climate. Hope and ambition, the two great levers of the world, with them are not largely developed; there has been no opportunity for their growth. Ambitions cannot exist without an aim, nor hope without an object. Just as in certain dark caves of the world, where daylight never penetrates, the fish found there have no eyes, because, from long disuse of the organ, it has gradually lessened and died

out; so hope and ambition amongst the moral faculties must equally disappear without an object in life.

It is therefore tolerably certain that where, according to phrenologists, the organ of Hope is situated, there the Breton head will be found undeveloped.

Now without hope no one can be constitutionally happy, and the Bretons would be amongst the unhappiest on earth, just as they are amongst the most slow-moving, if it were not for a counterbalancing quality which they own in large excess. This virtue is veneration; and it is this which saves them.

They are the most earnest and devoted, almost superstitiously religious of people. They observe their Sabbaths, their fasts and feasts with a severity and punctuality beyond all praise. With few exceptions, their churches are very inferior to those of Normandy, but each returning Sunday finds the Breton churches full of an earnest crowd, evidently assembled for the purpose of worshipping with their whole heart and soul. The rapt expression of many of the faces makes them for the moment simply beautiful, and if an artist could only transfer their fervency to canvas, he would produce a picture worthy of the masters of the Middle Ages, and read a lesson to the world far greater than that of an *Angelus* or a *Magdalene*.

It is a sight worth going very far to see, these earnest worshippers, with whom the head is never turned and the eye never wanders. The further you pass into the interior of Brittany—into the remote districts of the Morbihan, for instance—where the outer world, with its advancement and civilization, scarcely seems to have penetrated, there fervency and devotion are still full of the element of superstition; there you will find that faith becomes almost synonymous with a strict observance of prayers, penances and the commands of the Church. When the Angelus rings out in the evening, you will see the labourer, wending his way homeward, suddenly arrest his steps in the ploughed field, and with bent head, pass in silent prayer the dying moments of *crépuscule*.

There will scarcely be an exception to the rule, either in men or women. The reverence has grown with their growth, having first been born with them of inheritance: the heritage and the growth of centuries. All over the country you will find Calvaries erected: huge stone crosses and images of the Crucifixion, many of them crumbling and beautiful with the lapse of ages, the stone steps at their base worn with the devotion of pilgrims: crosses that stand out so solemnly and picturesquely in the gloaming against the background of the grey, cold Breton skies, and give a religious tone to the whole country.

The Bretons have ever remained a race apart, possessing their own language, their own habits, manners and customs; not becoming absorbed with other nations, nor absorbing in themselves any foreign element. Separated from Normandy by no visible

boundary line, divided by no broad Channel, the Bretons are as different from the Normans as the Normans are distinct from the English. They have a high standard of integrity, of right and wrong, there is the distinct feeling of *Noblesse oblige* amongst them; their *noblesse* consisting in the fact that, being Breton, *il faut agir loyalement*. If they pass you their word, you may be sure they will not go from it: it is as good as their bond. They are a hundred years behind the rest of mankind, but there is a great charm and a great compensation in their simplicity.

Normandy may be called the country of beautiful churches, Brittany of beautiful towns.

This is eminently true of Morlaix, for, in spite of the removal of many an ancient landmark, it is still wonderfully interesting. In situation it is singularly favoured and romantic, placed as it is on the sides of three deep ravines. Hills rise on all sides, shutting in the houses; hills fertile and well-wooded; in many places cultivated and laid out in gardens, where flowers grow and flourish all the year round, and orchards that in spring-time are one blaze, one wealth of blossoming fruit trees.

We looked out upon all this that first morning. Not a wealth of blossoming trees, for the blossoms were over. But before us stretched the high hills, and surrounding us were all the houses of Morlaix, old and new. The sun we have said shone upon all, and we needed all this brightness to make up for the discomforts of the past night. H. C. declared that his dreams had been of tread-mills, monastic penances, and the rack; but he had survived the affliction, and this morning was eager for action.

It was market-day, and the market-place lay just to the right of us. The stalls were in full force; the butter and poultry women in strong evidence, and all the other stalls indigenous to the ceremony. There was already a fair gathering of people, many of them *paysans*, armed with umbrellas as stout and clumsy as themselves. For the Bretons know and mistrust their own climate, and are too well aware that the day of a brilliant morning too often ends in weeping skies. Many wore costumes which, though quaint, were not by any means beautiful. They were heavy and ungraceful, like the people themselves: broad-brimmed hats and loose trunk hose that hung about them like sacks, something after the fashion of Turkish pantaloons; and the men wore their hair in huge manes, hanging down their backs, ugly and untidy; habits, costumes and people all indicative of la Bretagne Bretonnante—la Basse Bretagne.

It was a lively scene, in which we longed to take a part; listen to the strange language, watch the ways and manners of this distinctive race, who certainly are too aboriginal to win upon you at first sight.

The hotel was wide awake this morning, full of life and movement. All who had had to do with us last night gave us a special greeting. They seemed to look upon us almost as *enfants de la maison;* had

taken us in and done for us under special circumstances, and so had special claims upon us. Moreover, we were English, and the English are much considered in Morlaix.

We looked upon last night's adventures as the events of a dream, though at the time they had been very painful realities. The first object in the hotel to meet our gaze was André, his face still tied up like a mummy, still looking the Image of Misery, as if he and repose had known nothing of each other since we had parted from him. He was, however, very anxious for our welfare, and hoped we had slept well on our impromptu couches.

Next, on descending, we caught sight of Madame, taking the air and contemplating the world at large at the door of her bureau. The moment we appeared the air became too strong for her, and she rapidly passed through her bureau to a sanctum sanctorum beyond, into which, of course, we could not penetrate. We looked upon this as a tacit confession of a guilty conscience, and agreed magnanimously to make no further allusion to her lapsed memory. So when we at length met face to face, she, like André, was full of amiable inquiries for our health and welfare.

We sallied forth, and whatever we thought of Morlaix last night, we thought no less of it to-day.

It is a strange mixture of ancient and modern, as we were prepared to find it. On all sides rose the steep hills, within the shelter of which the town reposes. The situation is exceedingly striking. Stretching across one end of the town with most imposing effect is the enormous viaduct, over which the train rolls towards the station. It possesses also a footway for pedestrians, from which point the whole town lies mapped at your feet, and you may trace the far-away windings of the river. The viaduct is nearly two hundred feet high, and nearly four hundred yards long, and from its position it looks even more gigantic than it is. It divides the town into two portions, as it were, the outer portion consisting of the port and harbour: and from this footway far down you may see the picturesque shipping at repose: a very modest amount to-day moored to the river side, consisting of a few barges, a vessel or two laden with coal or wood, and a steamer in which you might take passage for Hâvre, or perhaps some nearer port on the Brittany Coast.

It is a charming picture, especially if the skies overhead are blue and the sun is shining. Then the town is lying in alternate light and shade; the pavements are chequered with gabled outlines, long drawn out or foreshortened according to their position. The canal bordering the old market-place is lined with a long row of women, alternately beating linen upon boards and rinsing it in the water. We know that they are laughing and chattering, though we cannot hear them; for a group of even sober Breton women could not be together and keep silence. They take life very seriously and earnestly; with them it is not all froth and evaporation; but this is their individual

view of existence; collectively there comes the reaction, forming the lights and shadows of life, just as we have the lights and shadows in nature. That reaction must come is the inevitable law; and possibly explains why there are so many apparent contradictions in people.

Morlaix has had an eventful history in the annals of Brittany. It takes its name from *Mons Relaxus*, the hill that was crowned by the ancient castle; a castle which existed at the time of the Roman occupation, if the large number of medals and pieces of Roman money discovered in its foundations may be taken as indicating its epoch. Many of these remains may be seen in the small museum of the town. They date from the third century.

The progress of Morlaix was slow. Very little is recorded of its earlier history. Though the Romans occupied it, we know not what they did there. Nearly all traces of Roman architecture have disappeared. The town has been frequently sacked and pillaged and burnt, sacrilege in which the English have had many a hand; and even Roman bricks and mortar will yield in time to destructive agencies.

Even in the eleventh century it was still nothing more than a small fishing town, a few houses nestling in the ravine, and sheltered by a huge rampart on the south-west. Upon the *Mons Relaxus*, the hill giving its name to the town, stood the lordly castle, the two rivers flowing, one on either side, which further down unite and form one stream. To-day all traces of the castle have disappeared and the site is planted with trees, and quiet citizens walk to and fro beneath their shade, where centuries ago there echoed the clash of arms and the shouts of warriors going forth conquering and to conquer. For in those days the Romans were the masters of the world, and seemed born only for victory.

In the twelfth century, Morlaix began a long series of vicissitudes. In 1187 Henry II. of England laid siege to it, and it gave in after a resistance of nine weeks. It was then in possession of the Dukes of Brittany, who built the ancient walls of the town, traces of which yet exist, and are amongst the town's most interesting remains.

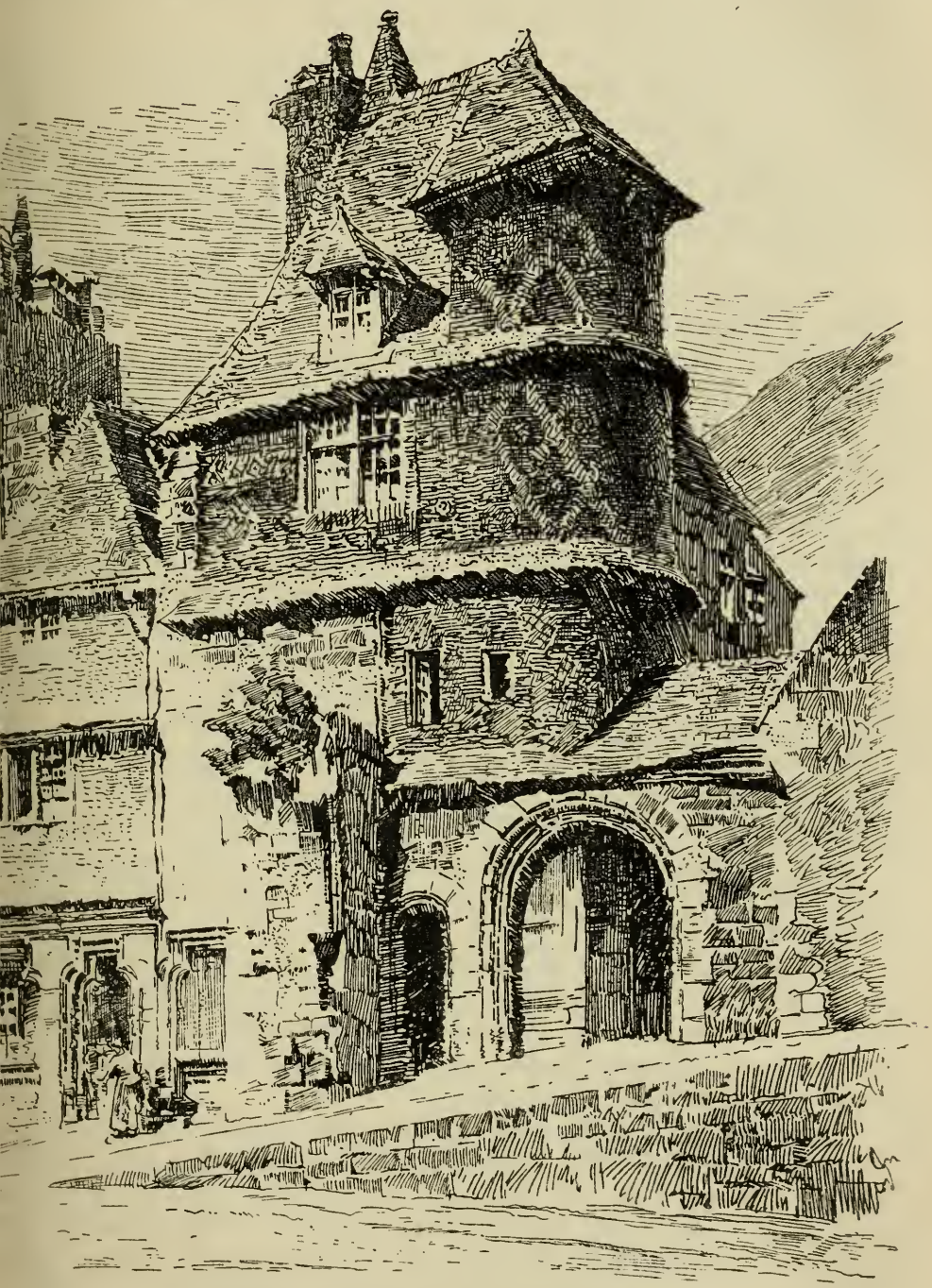
The occupation of the English being distasteful to the Bretons, they continually rebelled against it; though, as far as can be known, the English were no hard task-masters, forcing them, as the Egyptians did the Israelites, to make bricks without straw.

In 1372 the English were turned out of their occupation, and the Dukes of Brittany once more reigned. It was an unhappy change for the discontented people, as they soon found. John IV., Duke of Brittany, was guilty of every species of tyranny and cruelty, and many of the inhabitants were sacrificed.

Time went on and Morlaix had no periods of great repose. Every now and then the English attacked it, and in the reign of Francis I. they pillaged and burnt it, destroying antiquities that perhaps to-day

would have been worth many a king's ransom. This was in the year 1532.

In 1548, Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, a child of five years only,



GATEWAY OF THE OLD MONASTERY, MORLAIX.

disembarked at the wonderfully quaint little town of Roscoff to marry the Dauphin of France, who afterwards reigned as Francis II. She made a triumphal entry into Morlaix, was lodged at the Jacobin

convent, and took part in the Te Deum that was celebrated in her honour in Notre Dame du Mur. This gives an additional interest to Morlaix, for every place visited by the beautiful and unfortunate Queen of Scots, every record preserved of her, possesses a romantic charm that time has been unable to weaken.

As she was returning to the convent after the celebration of the Te Deum, and they were passing what was called the Gate of the Prison, the drawbridge gave way and fell into the river. It was fortunately low water, and no lives were lost. But the Scots Guards, separated from the young Queen by the accident, took alarm, thought the whole thing had been planned, and called out: "Treason! Treason!" Upon which the Chevalier de Rohan, who rode near the Queen, quickly turned his horse and shouted: "Never was Breton guilty of treason!"

And this exclamation may be considered a key-note to their character. The Bretons, amongst their virtues, may count that of loyalty. All is fair in love and war, it is said; but the Bretons would betray neither friend nor foe under any circumstance whatever.

For two hundred years Morlaix has known peace and repose, as far as the outer world is concerned. She has given herself up to religious institutions, and has grown and prospered. So it comes to pass that she is a strange mixture of new and old, and that side by side with a quaint and wonderful structure of the Middle Ages, we find a house of the present day flourishing like a green bay tree—a testimony to prosperity, and an eyesore to the lover of antiquity. But these wonders of the Middle Ages must gradually disappear. As time rolls on, and those past centuries become more and more remote, the old must give place to the new; ancient buildings must fall away in obedience to the inevitable laws of time, progress and destruction.

This is especially true of Morlaix. Much that was old-world and lovely has gone for ever, and day by day something more is disappearing.

We sallied forth, but unaccompanied by Misery, who was hard at work in the hotel, preparing us rooms wherein, as he expressed it, we should that night lodge as Christians. Whether, last night, he had put us down as Mahometans, Fire Worshippers, or heathens of some other denomination, he did not say.

The town had lost the sense of weirdness and mystery thrown over it by the darkness. The solemn midnight silence had given place to the activity of work and daylight; all shops were open, all houses unclosed; people were hurrying to and fro. Our strange little procession of three was no more, and André carrying a flaring candle would have been anything but a picturesque object in the sunshine.

But what was lost of weirdness and mystery was more than made up by the general effect of the town, by the minute details everywhere visible, by the sense of life and movement. Usually the little town is quiet and somewhat sleepy; to-day the inhabitants were roused

out of their Breton lethargy by the presence of so many strangers amongst them, and by the fact of its being market day.

More than even last night, we were impressed by the wonderful outlines of the Grand' Rue, where the lattice had been lighted up and the mysterious vision had received a revelation in gazing upon H. C. To-day behind the lattice there was comparative darkness, and the vision had descended to a lower region, and the unromantic occupation of opening a roll of calico and displaying its advantages to a market woman who was evidently bent upon driving a bargain. The vision caught sight of H. C., and for the moment calico and everything else was forgotten; the market woman no doubt had her calico at her own price.

The street itself is one of the most wonderful in France. As you stand at the end and look down towards *Les Halles*, you have a picturesque group, an assemblage of outlines scarcely to be equalled in the world. The street is narrow, and the houses, more and more overhanging as they ascend floor by floor, approach each other very closely towards the summit. The roofs are, some of them, gabled; others, slanting backwards, give room for picturesque dormer windows. Wide lattices stretch across some of the houses from end to end; in others the windows are smaller and open outwards like ordinary French windows, but always latticed, always picturesque.

Below, on the ground floor, many of the houses are given up to shops, but, fortunately, they have not been modernised.

The whole length of the front is unglazed, and you gaze into an interior full of mysterious gloom, in which you can scarcely see the wares offered for sale. The rooms go far back. They are black with age: a dark panelling that you would give much to be able to transport to other scenes. The ceilings are low, and great beams run across them. The doors admitting you to these wonderful old-world places match well their surroundings. They are wide and substantial, with beams that would effectually guard a prison, and wonderful old locks and keys and pieces of ironwork that set you wild with longings to turn housebreaker and carry away these ancient and artistic relics.

You feel that nothing in the lives of the people who live in these wonderful tenements can be commonplace. However unconscious they may be of the refining influence, it is there, and it must leave its mark upon them.

At least, you think so. You know what the effect would be upon yourself. You know that if you could transport this street bodily to some quiet nook in England and surround it by velvety lawns and ancient trees that have grown and spread with the lapse of ages, your existence would become a long and romantic day-dream, and you would be in danger of living the life of a recluse and never separating yourself from these influences. Custom would never stale their infinite variety; familiarity would never breed

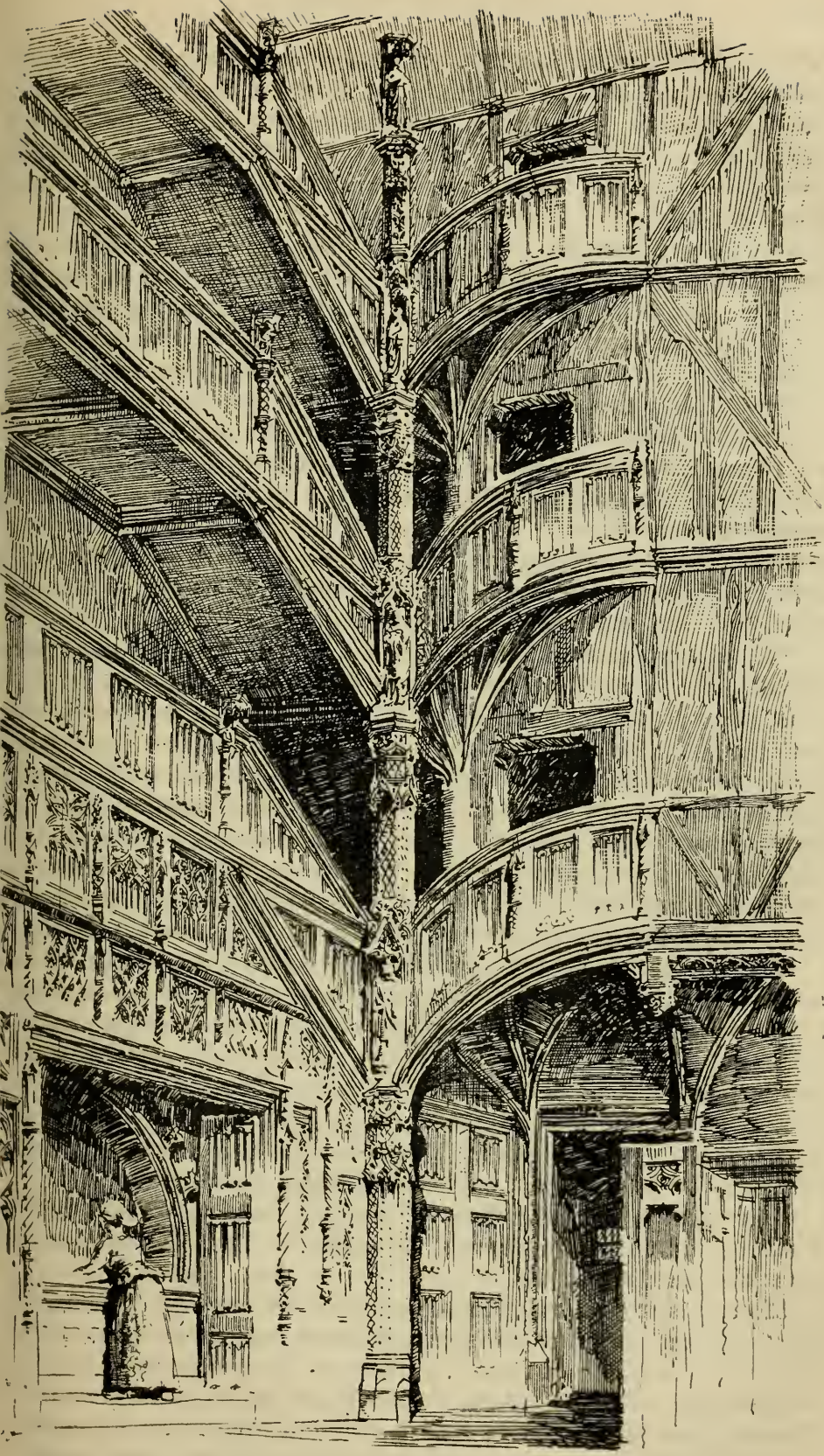
contempt. Who tires of wandering through a gallery of the old masters? who can endure the modern in comparison? It is not the mere antiquity of all these things that charm; it is that they are beautiful in themselves, and belong to an age when the Spirit of Beauty was poured out upon the world from full vials held in the hands of unseen angels, and what men touched and created they perfected.

But the vials have long been exhausted and the angels have fled back to heaven.

The houses all bear a strong family resemblance to each other, which adds to their charm and harmony. Most of them possess two doors, one giving access to the shop we have just described, the other admitting to a hall or vestibule, panelled, and often richly sculptured. Above the *rez-de-chaussée*, two or three stories rise, supported by enormous beams richly moulded and sculptured, again supported in their turn by other beams equally massive, whose massiveness is disguised by rich sculpture and ornamentation: a profusion of boughs, of foliage, so beautifully wrought that you may trace the veins in the leaves of niches, pinnacles and statues: corner posts ornamented with figures of kings, priests, saints, monsters, and bagpipers. The windows seem to multiply themselves as they ascend, with their small panes crossed and criss-crossed by leaden lines: the fronts of many are slated with slates cut into lozenge shapes; and many possess the "slate apron" found in fifteenth century houses, with the slates curved outwardly to protect the beam.

By the second door you pass down a long passage into what originally was probably a small yard, but has now been turned into a living-room or kitchen covered over at the very top of the house by a skylight. This is an arrangement now peculiar to Brittany. The staircase occupies one side of the space, and you may trace the windings to the very summit, curiously arranged at the angles. These singularly-constructed rooms have given to the houses the name of *lanternes*. Every room has an enormous fireplace, in which you might almost roast an ox, built partly of wood and stone, richly carved and ornamented. But let the eye rest where it will, it is charmed by rich carvings and mouldings, beams wonderfully sculptured, statues, ancient niches and grotesques.

In one of these houses is to be found a wonderful staircase of carved oak and great antiquity, that in itself would make Morlaix worth visiting. It is in the Flamboyant style, and was probably erected about the year 1500. For Brittany is behind the age in its carvings as much as in everything else, and this staircase in any other country might safely be put down to the year 1450. It is of wonderful beauty, and almost matchless in the world: a marvel of skill and refinement. It possesses also a *lavoir*, the only known example in existence, with doors to close when it is not in use; the whole thing a dream of beautiful sculpture.



OLD STAIRCASE IN THE GRAND' RUE, MORLAIX, SHOWING LAVOIR.

One other house in Morlaix has also a very wonderful staircase; still more wonderful, perhaps, than that in the Grand' Rue; but it is not in such good preservation. The house is in the Rue des Nobles, facing the covered market-place. It is called the house of the Duchesse Anne, and here in her day and generation she must have lived or lodged.

The house is amongst the most curious and interesting and ancient in Morlaix, but it is doomed. The whole interior is going to rack and ruin, and it was at the peril of our lives that we scrambled up the staircase and over the broken floors, where a false step might have brought us much too rapidly back to terra firma. Morlaix is not enterprising enough to restore and save this relic of antiquity.

The staircase, built on the same lines as the wonderful staircase in the Grand' Rue, is, if possible, more refined and beautiful; but it has been allowed to fall into decay, and much of it is in a hopelessly worm-eaten condition. H. C. was in ecstasies, and almost went down on his knees before the image of an angel that had lost a leg and an arm, part of a wing, and the whole of its nose; but very lovely were the outlines that remained.

"Like the Venus of Milo in the Louvre," said H. C., "what remains of it is all the more precious for what is not."

It was not so very long since we had visited the Louvre together, and he had remained rapt before the famous Venus for a whole hour, contemplating her from every point of view, and declaring that now he should never marry: he had seen perfection once, and should never see it again. This I knew to be nothing but the enthusiasm of the moment. The very next pretty face and form he encountered, animated with the breath of life, would banish from his mind all allegiance to the cold though faultless marble image.

The exterior of the house of the Duchesse Anne was as remarkable as the interior for its wonderful antiquity, its carvings, its statues and grotesques, its carved pilasters between the windows, each of different design and all beautiful, its gabled roofs and its latticed panes that had long fallen out of the perpendicular. Both this and the next house were closed; and it was heartbreaking to think that perhaps on our next visit to Morlaix empty space would here meet our gaze, or, still worse, a barbarous modern aggression.

Few towns now, comparatively speaking, possess fifteenth century remains, and those few towns should preserve them as amongst their most cherished treasures.

Morlaix is still amongst the most favoured towns in this respect. Go which way you will, and amongst much that is modern, you will see ancient houses and nooks and corners that delight you and take you back to the Middle Ages. Now it will be an old house in the market-place that has escaped destruction; now a whole court up some narrow turning, too out-of-the-way to have been worthy of demolition; and now it will be a whole street, like the Grand' Rue

which has been preserved, no doubt of deliberate intent, as being one of the most typical fifteenth century streets in the whole of France, an ornament and an attraction to the town, raising Morlaix out of the commonplace, and causing antiquarians and many others to visit it.

For if all the houses of the Grand' Rue are not actually fifteenth century—and they are not—they all look of an age ; they all belong to the same school of architecture, and the harmony of the whole street is perfect. Looking upwards, the eye is delighted at the outlines of the gabled roofs that stand out so clearly and sharply against the background of the sky ; and you return to it over and over again during your sojourn in Morlaix, and each time you gaze longer and think it more beautiful than before.

These old-world towns and streets are very refreshing to the spirit. We grow weary of our modern towns, with their endless monotony and their utter absence of all taste and beauty. Just as when sojourning in a country devoid of monuments and ruins, the mind at length absolutely hungers for some grand, ecclesiastical building, some glorious vestige of early ages ; so when we have once grown familiar with mediæval towns and outlines, it becomes an absolute necessity occasionally to run away from our prosy nineteenth century habitations, and refresh our spirit, and absorb into our inmost nature all these refining old-world charms. It is an influence more easily felt than described ; also, it does not appeal to all natures. We can only understand Shakespeare by the Shakespeare that is within us—an oft quoted saying but a very true one ; and Pan might pipe for ever to one who has no music in his soul ; and the rainbow might arch itself in vain to one who is colour-blind.

Morlaix also, as we have said, owes much to its situation.

Lying between three ravines, it is most romantically placed. Its people are sheltered from many of the cruel winds of winter, and even the sturdy Bretons cannot be quite indifferent to the stern blast that comes from the East laden with ice and snow.

Not that the people of Morlaix look particularly robust, though we found them very civil and often very interesting. We must pay for our privileges, and if a town is built in a hollow, and is sheltered from the east wind, the chances are that its climate will be enervating. This, of course, has its drawbacks, and sets the seal of consumption on many a victim that might have escaped in higher latitudes.

One charming type we found in Morlaix, consisting of a family that ought to have lived in the middle ages, and been painted by Raphael, or have served as models for Fra Angelico's angels. Three generations.

We were climbing the Jacob's ladder leading to the station one day, when we chanced upon an old man who sold antiquities. We were first taken with his countenance. It had honesty and integrity written upon it. Had he been a German, living in Ober-Ammergau,

he would certainly have been chosen for the chief character in the play—a play, by the way, that has always seemed questionable, since the greatest and most momentous Drama creation ever witnessed appears too sacred a theme to be theatrically represented, even in a spirit of devotion.

Our antiquarian was growing old. His face was pale, beautiful and refined, with a very spiritual expression. The eyes were of a pure blue, in which dwelt almost the innocence of childhood. He was slightly deformed in the back. There was a pathetic tone in the voice, a resigned expression in the face, which told of a long life of struggle, and possibly much hardship and trouble—the latter undoubtedly.

We soon found that he had in him the true artistic temperament. His own work was beautiful, his carvings were full of poetical feeling. If not a genius himself, he was one whose offspring should possess the "sacred fire," which must be born with its possessor, can never after be kindled. In one or two instances we pointed to something superlatively good. "Ah, that is my son's work," he said; "it is not mine." And there was an inflection in the voice which told of pride and affection, and perhaps was the one bright spot in the old man's pilgrimage, perhaps his one sorrow and trouble—who could tell? We had not seen the son; we felt we must do so.

The old man's most treasured possession was a crucifix, to which he pointed with a reverential devotion.

"I have had it nearly thirty years," he said, "and I never would sell it. It is so beautiful that it must be by a great master—one of the old masters. People have come to see it from far and near. Many have tempted me with a good offer, but I would never part with it. Now I want the money and I wish to sell it. Will you not buy it?"

It was certainly exquisitely beautiful; carved in ivory deeply browned with age. We had never seen anything to equal the position of the Figure upon the Cross; the wonderful beauty of the head; the sorrow and sacredness of the expression; the perfect anatomy of the body. But in our strictly Protestant prejudices we hesitated. As an object of religion of course we could have nothing to do with it; the Roman Catholic creed, with its outward signs and symbols, was not ours; who even in our own Church mourned the almost lost beauty and simplicity of our ancient ritual; that substitution of the ceremonial for the spiritual, the creature for the Creator, which seems to threaten the downfall of the Establishment. Would it be right to purchase and possess this beautiful thing merely as an object of refined and wonderful art? I looked at H. C. In his face at least there was no hesitation. Such a prize was not to be lost if it could be obtained within reasonable limits. It must take a place amongst his old china, his headless Saints and Madonnas!

The first time we came across the old man—it was quite by

OLD HOUSES, MORLAIX.

accident that we found him out—we felt that we had discovered a prize in human nature: one of those rare exceptions that exist still in out-of-the-way nooks and corners, but are seldom found. It is so

difficult to go through the world and remain unspoiled by it; especially for those who, having to work for their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, have to come into daily contact with that harder, coarser element in human nature, that, for ever over-reaching its neighbour, tries to believe that the race *is* to the swift and the battle to the strong.

The son was away from the town on the occasion of our first visit. The father seemed proud of him in a quiet, gentle sort of way, and gentleness was evidently the key-note to his character. He said his son had carried off all the prizes in a Paris School of Art, and one prize that was especially difficult to obtain. Would we come again and see him, and see his work?

We went again. At the door-sill a little child greeted us; the most beautiful little face we had ever seen. Nothing in any picture of an old master ever equalled it. At the first moment we almost thought it the face of an angel, as it looked up into our faces with all the confidence and innocence of infancy. The child might have been eighteen months old, just at the age when the eyes begin to take that inquiring look upon everything, as if they had just awakened to the fact that they had arrived upon a scene where all was new and strange. The eyes of this child were large and of a celestial blue; fair curls fell over his shoulders; his cheeks were round like a cherub's, and had the hue of the damask rose. The strangest part about the face was its refinement, as if the little fellow, instead of being born of the people, had come of a long line of noble ancestors.

We went into the workshop, and there found the father of the child at work, the son of the old man.

We no longer wondered at the child's beauty; it was a counterpart of the father's, but to the latter was added all the grace and maturity of manhood. Unlike the old man, the face was round and flushed with the hue of health. Large dark blue eyes looked out earnestly at you from under long dark lashes. The head was running over with dark crisp curls. The face was also singularly refined, had an exceedingly pure and modest expression. No Apollo, real or imagined, was ever more perfect in form and feature. To look upon that face was to love its owner.

He was hard at work, carving, his wonderfully-drawn plans about him. It was certainly the best modern work we had ever seen; and here, we felt, was a genius. Probably it had been hampered for want of means, as so many other geniuses have been since the foundation of the world. He ought to have been known and celebrated; the master of a great and famous *atelier* in the chief of gay cities; appreciated by the world—and perhaps spoilt by flattery. Instead of which, he was working for his daily bread in a small town, unknown, unappreciated; toiling in a small, retired workshop, where people seldom penetrated, and a good deal of his work depended upon chance.

Yet, if his face bespoke one thing more than another, it was happiness and contentment. Ambition seemed to have no part in his life. That he loved his art was evident from the tenderness with which he handled his drawings and looked upon his carvings. It may be that this love was all-sufficient for him, and that as long as he had health to work, and fancy to create, and daily bread to eat, he cared for nothing more.

The little rift within the lute? Ah, who is without it? What household has not its skeleton? Where shall we find perfect happiness—or anything perfect? In this instance it was soon apparent to us; and again we marvelled at the inconsistency of human nature; the incongruity of things; the way men spoil their lives and make crooked things that ought to be, and might have been, so straight.

We could not help wondering what sort of help-meet this Apollo had chosen for himself; what angelic mother had given to the world this little blue-eyed cherub, whose fitting place seemed not earth but heaven.

Even as we wondered we were answered. A voice called to the child from above, and the child turned its lovely head, but moved not. Then the owner of the voice was heard descending, and the mother appeared. We were dismayed. Never had we seen a woman more abandoned and neglected. Everything about her was slovenly. Her hair fell about her face and shoulders in tangled masses; her clothing was torn and neglected. We had seen such exhibitions in the dens of London, never in a decent household. It made us feel inexpressibly sad and sorrowful. Here was a great mystery; two people terribly ill-matched. We glanced at the husband, expecting to see a flush mantling his brow. But he quietly went on with what he was about, as though he saw not, and mother and child disappeared upstairs.

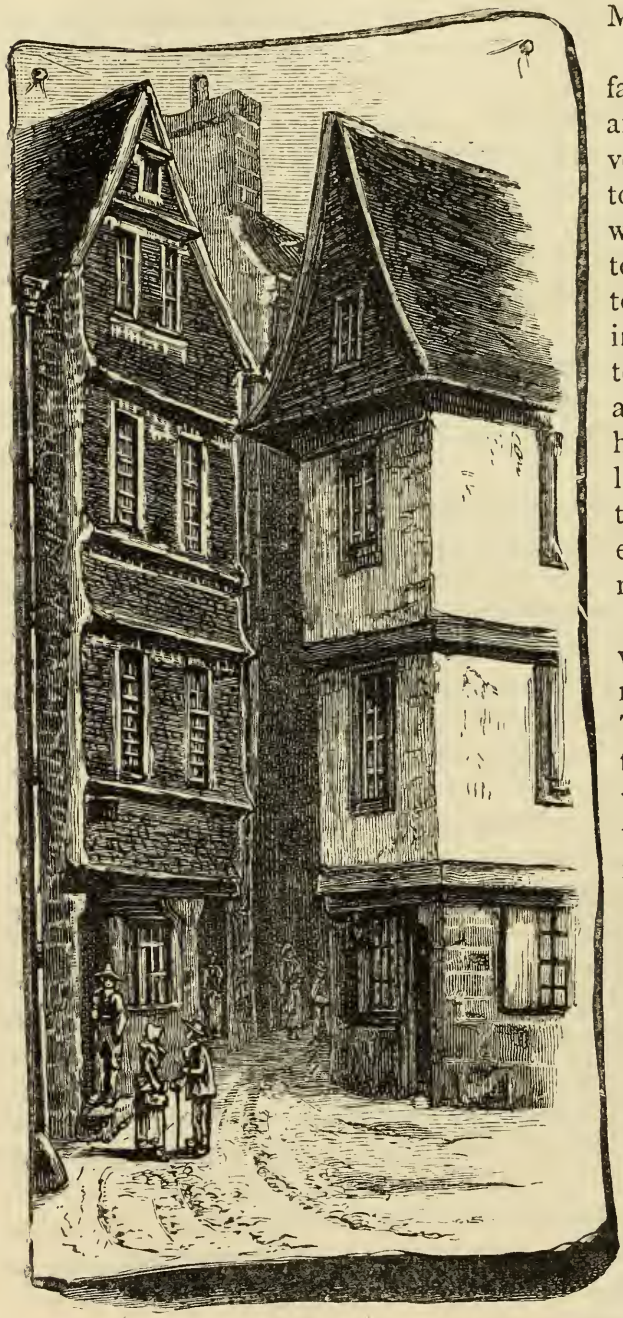
Here, then, whether he knew it or not, was the little rift within the lute. An ill-assorted marriage, a life-long mistake. Had he looked and chosen above him, his help-meet might have assisted him to rise in the world and to become famous. As it was, he had been caught by a pretty face—for, with due care and attention and a settled expression, the face would have been undoubtedly pretty—and had sealed his fate. With such a wife no man could rise.

We left him to his art and went our way, very sorrowful. It was a lovely morning, and we started back for the hotel, having arranged to take a drive at a certain hour along the river banks to the sea.

We found the conveyance ready for us. Monsieur, by special attentions, was making up for the lapses of that one terrible night.

Above us, as we went, stretched the gigantic viaduct, so singular a contrast with the ancient houses and remains of this old town; forming a comparison that certainly makes Morlaix one of the most remarkable towns in France. Beneath it rose the houses on the

rocky slopes, one above another, so that from the back you may almost enter them from the roof, as you do some of the Tyrolese châlets. In Morlaix it has given rise to a proverb: "Du jardin au grenier, comme on dit à Morlaix."



MORLAIX.

Beneath the viaduct, far down, was the river and the little port, where vessels of considerable tonnage may anchor, and which has added much to the prosperity of the town, that trades largely in corn, vegetables, butter, honey, wax, oil-seeds, and—as we have seen—horses. There is also a large tobacco manufactory here, which gives employment to an immense number of hands.

We passed all this and went our way down the right bank of the river. The scenery is very picturesque; the heights are well wooded, broken and undulating. Some of the richer inhabitants of Morlaix have built themselves houses on the heights; charming châteaux where they spend their summers, and luxuriate in the fresh breezes that blow up from the sea. Across there on the left bank of the river, rises the convent of St. François, a large building where the *religieux* retire from the world, yet are not too isolated.

And on this side, on the *Cours Beaumont*, a lovely walk planted with trees, we come to the Fontaine des Anglais, so called because here, in 1522, six hundred English were surprised asleep by the people of Morlaix, and slain. They had, however, courted the

own doom. Henry VIII. had picked a quarrel with Francis I. for seizing the ships of English merchants in French ports. The English king had escorted with his fleet the Emperor Charles V., of Spain, under command of the Earl of Surrey, and in returning, it entered the river, surprised Morlaix, burnt and sacked the town, and murdered many of its inhabitants. They left it loaded with spoil; and when the inhabitants surprised these six hundred English they revenged themselves upon them without mercy.

To-day, we had no sooner reached the spot than suddenly the clouds gathered, the sky was overcast, a squall rose shrieking and whistling amidst the trees, and there was every appearance of a downpour. We were not prepared for it, but we rashly continued our way. At last, just before we reached a small road-side cabaret, down it came, as if the whole reservoir of cloudland had been let loose.

We hastily stopped at the auberge, already half-drenched, and H. C. crying out "Any port in a storm," we entered it. It was humble enough, yet might every benighted traveller in every storm find as good a refuge!

The good woman of the house was standing at her poêle, preparing the mysteries of the mid-day dinner. Her husband, she said, had gone into Morlaix, with fish to sell—it was one of their chief means of livelihood. He bought the fish from the fishermen who came up the river, and sold it again to the hotels. One of his best customers was the Hôtel d'Europe, and M. Hellard was a brave monsieur, who never beat them down in their prices, and had always a pleasant word for them. Madame was very amiable too, for the matter of that.

It was rather a hard life, but what with that and the little profit of the auberge, they managed to make both ends meet.

She had three children. The eldest was a girl, and had her wits about her. She had been to Paris with her father, and had seen the Exhibition, and talked about it like a grown-up person. But her father had taken her one night to the Théâtre des Variétés in the Champs Elysées, and the girl had been mad ever since to become a *chanteuse* and an actress.

The ambitious child—a girl of fourteen—at this moment came down stairs, and a more forbidding young damsel we had seldom seen. Her mother had evidently no control over her; she was mistress of the situation; ordered her mother about, slapped a younger brother, a little fellow who was playing at a table with some leaden soldiers, and finally, to our relief, disappeared into an inner room. We saw her no more.

"It is always like that," sighed the poor mother, who seemed by no means a woman to be lightly sat upon; "always like that ever since she went that *malheureux* voyage to Paris. It has changed her character; made her dissatisfied with her lot; I fear she will one day leave us and go back to Paris for good—or rather for evil;

for she will have no one to look after her; and, I am told, it is a sink of iniquity. I was never there, and know very little about the ways of large towns. Morlaix is quite enough for me. But she is afraid of her father, that is one *bonheur*."

All this time she had been brewing us coffee, and now she brought it to us in her best china, with some of the spirit of the country which does duty for cognac and robs so many of the Bretons of their health and senses. But it was not a time to be fastidious. To counteract the effects of the elements and drenched clothes, we helped ourselves liberally to a decoction that we thought excellent, but under other conditions should have considered poisonous.

The while our hostess, glad of an appreciative audience, poured into our ears tales and stories of herself, her life and the neighbourhood. How she had originally belonged to the Morbihan, and when a girl dressed in the costume of her country, with the short petticoats and the picturesque kerchief crossed upon the breast. How her father had been a well-to-do *bazvalan* and made the Sunday clothes for the whole village. And how she had met her fate when her bonhomme came that way on a visit to an old uncle in the village, and in six months they were married, and she had come to Morlaix. She had never regretted her marriage. She had a good husband, who worked hard; and if they were poor, they were far from being in want. She had really only one trouble in the world, and that was that she could do nothing with her eldest girl. She would obey no one but her father; and even he was losing control over her.

"Is her father much away?" we asked, thinking that the young damsel looked as if she were under no very stern discipline.

"Not on long voyages, such as going to Paris or the Morbihan," replied the woman; "but he is often away for half-a-day or so, selling his fish in Morlaix and doing commissions for their little auberge. And then," she added with a condoning smile, "of course he sometimes met with a camarade who enticed him to drink a glass too much, though that was a rare occurrence. Mais que voulez-vous? Human nature was weak; and for her part she really thought that men were weaker than women. Certainly they were more self-indulgent."

"It is because they have more temptations," said H. C., pleading the cause of his own sex. "Women had more to do with home and the pot-au-feu."

At this moment our hostess's pot-au-feu began to boil over, and she darted across the room, took it off the fire and returned, laughing.

"Even the pot-au-feu we cannot always manage, it seems," she remarked; "and so there are faults on all sides. Sometimes on a Sunday her husband went and spent the day at Roscoff, where he had a cousin living. Did messieurs know Roscoff—a deadly-lively little place, with a quaint harbour, where there was a chapel to commemorate the landing of Marie Stuart?"

We said we did not know it, but purposed visiting it on the morrow if the skies ceased their deluge.

"Why does your husband not turn fisherman," we asked, "instead of buying his fish from others, and so selling it second-hand at a smaller profit? You are so close to the sea."

"Dame," replied the woman, "it is not his trade. He was never brought up to the sea; always hated it. And for the rest," she added, with a shudder, "Heaven forbid that he should turn fisherman! She had once dreamed three times running that he was drowned at sea; and she had feared the water ever since. She had almost made her husband take a vow that he would never go upon the sea. He generally took part once a year in the regatta; of course, there could be no danger; but she trembled the whole time until she saw him returning safe and sound. No, no! Chacun à son métier."

Here we interrupted the flow of eloquence, though the woman was really interesting with her straightforward confidences, her rather picturesque patois, and her numerous gestures.

We went to the door and surveyed the elements. The skies were lowering; the rain came down like a revengeful cataract; the road was flooded, and the water was beginning to flood the room. In front the river looked cold and threatening; it flowed towards the sea with an angry rush; our vehicle was refreshing itself before the door, and the horse and driver had taken refuge in the stable. The tops of the surrounding hills were hidden in mist; everywhere the rain roared. The scene was dreary and desolate in the extreme.

At this moment the driver appeared. "Was it of any use waiting? He knew the climate pretty well; the rain would never cease till sundown. Had we not better make the best of it and get back to Morlaix?"

We thought so, and gave the signal for departure. Our patience was exhausted—and so was our coffee. Our hostess was distressed. At least we would borrow an umbrella, and her husband's thick coat, and perhaps her shawl for our knees. She was too good; genuinely kind hearted; and in despair when we accepted nothing. We bade her farewell, settled her modest demands, and set out for Morlaix.

Arrived at the hotel like drowned rats, Madame was all anxiety and motherly solicitude, begged us to get between blankets and have tisane administered or some eau sucrée with a spoonful of rum in it. She bemoaned the uncertainty of the climate, and hoped we were not going to have bad weather for our visit. And when we declined all her polite attentions, assuring her that a change of clothing was all we needed, and all we should do, she declared that she was amazed at our temerity, but that she had the greatest admiration for the constitution and courage of the people of Greater Britain.

AFTER TWENTY YEARS.

By Ada M. Trotter.

"MAY you come in and rest, you ask? Why of course you may. Take this rocking-chair—but there, some men don't like rockers. Well, if so be you prefer it, stay as you be, right in the shadder of the vines. It's a pretty look-out from theer, I know, all down the valley over them meadow lands—and that rushing bit of river.

"You ask me if I know'd one Kitty Larkins, the prettiest gal in the county, the prettiest gal anywheres, you say. Yes, sir! I know'd her well. Dead? Yes, sir, Kitty—the bright, gay creature folks knew as Kitty Larkins died this day twenty years ago.

"Do I know how she died and the story of her life? I do well; I do; p'raps better nor most. You want to hear about her; maybe you would find it kind of prosing; but there, the afternoon sun *is* pretty hot, and the haymakers out there in the meadows have got a hard time of it.

"What's that! Don't I go and lend a hand in the press of the season? Well, I don't. Not for twenty year. There's them as calls it folly, but the smell of the hay brings it all back and turns me sick. You say you can't believe such a fine woman as me would be subject to fancies; you think I look too young, do you, to be talkin' this way of twenty years ago. Wall, there's more than one way of counting age. Some goes by grey hairs, some by happenings. But this that came so long ago is all as clear—clear as God's light upon the meadows there.

"But if you will have the whole story, let's begin at the beginnin', and that brings you to the old school-house where them three, neighbours' children they was, went to school together. There was Kitty of course, and Elihu Grant and Joel Barton, them was the three that my story's about.

"'Lihu was always a big, over-grown lad, with a steadfast, kind heart, not what folks called brilliant; he warn't going to be extraordinary when he grow'd up, didn't want to be, so fur as I know; he aimed to be as good a man's his father, nothing more, nothing less. Good and true was 'Lihu; all knew that, yet his name was never mentioned without a 'but,' not even by the school marm, though she said he was the best boy in her school.

"Kitty looked down some on 'Lihu, made him fetch and carry, and always accustomed herself to the 'but,' as if the good qualities wasn't of much account since they could not command general admiration. Yes, this had something to do with what follered; I can

see that plain enough. Still, I know she loved 'Lihu from babyhood deep down in her heart of hearts ——

"Anything wrong, sir? you give me a turn moving so sudden like. Let me see, where was I? Oh, talkin' about them boys. Well, let's get on.

"I've given you some idea of what 'Lihu was like, but seems to me harder to tell about that Barton boy, that gay, handsome, charming Joel, that kept the whole country alive with his doings and sayings from the time he could trot about alone.

"Wall! he *was* bright was Joel, and 'twas no wonder that his parents see it so plain and talk Joel day in and day out whenever they got a soul to listen to 'em. Kitty grew up admiring him; there warn't no 'but' in speaking of Joel. He done everything first class, from farm work to his lessons, so no wonder his folks acted proud of him and sent him to college to prepare for a profession.

"Wall, his success at college added some to his notoriety, and his doings was talked back and forth more'n ever.

"Then every term kind of altered him. He come back with a finer air, better language and a knowledge of the ways of society folks, that put him ahead of anyone else in the valley; while poor 'Lihu was just the same in speech and manner, and more retiring and modest than ever; and, though he was faithfuller, truer and stronger hearted than he'd ever given promise of being, folks never took to him as they did to young Joel.

"But I must go on, for young folks grow up and the signs of mischief come gradual like and was not seen by foolish Kitty, but increasing every time Joel come home for his vacations. Of course Kitty was to blame, but the Lord made her what she was.

"Yes, I can speak freely of her now, because, as I said before, this careless, pretty Kitty died twenty long years ago.

"Not before she married Joel, you ask? Well, of all impatient men! really I can't get on no quicker than I be doin', and if you're tired of it, why take your hat and go. Events don't fly as quick as words and I'm taking you over the course at race-horse speed, skipping where I can, so as to give you just the gist of the story.

"Wall then, Kitty loved life; not but what it meant work early and late to keep things as they oughter be on the old homestead. Her folks warn't as notable as they might ha' been till Kitty took hold, and then I tell you, sir, she made things spin. 'Twarn't only her pretty face that brought men like bees about the place; there was many as would ha' asked for her, if she'd been as homely as a door nail. But she sent 'em all away with the same story—all but her old sweethearts 'Lihu and Joel, and they was as much rivals when they grow'd up as they'd been at the old school-house, when Kitty treated 'Lihu like a yaller dog and showed favour to young Joel.

"But 'Lihu hung on. He come of a race never known to give up what they catched on to. Some way he gained ground too, for, with that shiftless dad at the head of things at the homestead, there was need of a wise counsellor to back up Kitty in the way she took hold.

"'Lihu was wise, and Kitty got to leaning on his word, and by the time that I be talkin' of, I s'pose there warn't no one that could have filled the place in Kitty's life that 'Lihu had made for himself —only he did not guess at that, and the more she realised it, the backwarder that silly young creature would have been to confess to it, even to herself.

"Sir, I ain't used to folks that give such sudden turns. Don't you s'pose you could set down and be comfortable somewheres while I be talkin', instead of twisting and snerling yourself up in my poor vines?

"You'd rather stand where you be; well, then, I'll get on with my story.

"I was coming to Joel. It's more interesting to strangers, that part about Joel, for he was, as I said before, everything 'Lihu lacked —bright and gay, handsome and refined. Ay, and he was a manly looking feller too, and had took lessons in fighting and worked through a gymnasium course, while 'Lihu knew no better exercises than sawing wood and pitching hay and such farm work. 'Lihu was clumsy in moving, but Joel graceful and light; you'd as soon have thought of the old church tower taking to dancing as of 'Lihu trying his hand at it; but Joel, of course, he were the finest dancer anyone had ever see'd in our neighbourhood.

"So it naturally come about that when Kitty wanted to have a gay time—and what young girl does not like fun sometimes?—she took to Joel and left 'Lihu to his fierce jealousy out in the cold.

"Joel had nothing to do but philander after Kitty, come vacations, and there he'd be lounging round the garden, reading poetry to her, when she'd a minute to set down, and telling her about the doings of gay society folks in cities.

"Kitty liked it all, why shouldn't she? and the more 'Lihu looked like a funeral the more she turned her back on him and favoured t'other. You see, sir, I give it you fair. There was faults all round; and if you want my candid opinion, that Joel was more to blame than Kitty, for, being a man of the world, he knew better than she what the end of it all was bound to be; that the day would come when she would have to make her choice between them and that to one of them that day would mean a broken heart, a spoiled life.

"Ah, well! It was hayin' time just twenty years ago, and a spell of weather just like this, perhaps a mite warmer, but much the same.

"Well, it threatened a thunderstorm, and all hands was pressed into the fields. Even Kitty was there, with her rake, for, to tell

the truth, she was child enough to love a few hours in the sweet-smelling meadows. Joel, he was there, he'd took off his store clothes, and was handsomer than ever in his flannels, and, with his deftness and muscle, was worth any two hired men in the field.

"He and 'Lihu, who had come over to lend a hand, was nigh to one another that afternoon; and there was things said between 'em, as they worked, as had to lay by for a settlin'. Kitty made things worse—silly girl that she was—by coming round in her gay way with her rake, and smiling at them both, so that it would have beat the Angel Gabriel to know which of them it were she had a leaning to.

"Truth was, Kitty was back into childhood, out there in the hay—merry and sweet as a rosebud she looked in her old faded bonnet. I see her just as plain, this poor child—that did so much mischief without meaning to hurt anybody. How was she to know that fierce fires of jealous, passionate hatred were at work, kindled by her to flame that sunshiny afternoon, as she danced along the meadow with her rake, happy as the June day seemed long?

"No, sir, you need not be impatient, for the story is about done.

"The last load of hay was pitched as the glowing sun went down. The thunderstorm had passed to the hills beyond, and on the horizon clouds lay piled, purple black. The men come in to supper, and then went out again. Kitty was busy with her dishes in the kitchen till dark; then there come a flash of lightning, and a growlin' of thunder. The last dish was put away, and so the girl went sauntering out, down to the bush of cluster roses by the garden gate, where she could look over into the barn-yard and call to the men still at work with the hay.

"Something took her farther—'twas as if a hand led her—and she crossed the yard, and down the lane she went till she got to the meadow gate that stood open as the men had left it after bringing that last heavy wain through.

"The moon was up—a moon that drifted serenely through the banks of clouds, ever upwards to the zenith.

"Sir, did you ever think—and being a stranger, sir, you must excuse the question—did you ever think of the wicked deeds that moon has looked upon since the creation of mortal man? Oh, yes, I know it, I know it well; in God's sunlight, that sin would never have been committed; but in the moonlight—the calm, still moonlight—passions rise to fever heat, the blow is struck, and man turns away with the curse of Cain written on his brow.

"Kitty, standing with her back against the gate, her eyes following the flitting light across the meadow to the mill-race by the path beyond, all at once felt her heart leap with nameless horror. Yet all she could see was shadows, for the figures was out of sight. All she could see was shadows—shadows cast upon the moonlit meadow-land where she had gaily danced with her rake in hand only a few hours before. Two giant forms (so the moonbeams made it) swayed

back and forth, gripped together like one, scarcely moving from one spot as they wrestled, as though 'twould take force to uproot them—force like that of the whirlwind in the spring, that tore the old oak like a sapling from its foundations laid centuries ago.

"Kitty, struck dumb like one in nightmare, fled across the meadow towards the mill-race.

"As she went, the shadows lifted and changed with a cruel uprising that told her the end was near. If she could have cried out then, and if they had heard! But as she fled on unheeding, the moon was suddenly obscured. It was pitch dark, and the muttering thunder broke into a roar that shook the earth under Kitty's feet. How long was it before the moon drifted from out that cloud-bank, where lightning played with zig-zag flames? How long?

"When the moonbeams fell again upon the meadow-lands the shadows were gone and Kitty stood alone upon the banks of the mill-race, looking at the rushing dark waters. When she turned homewards she met Joel face to face. He was pale, but a triumphant light shone in his eyes. He came forward with open arms—'Kitty, my Kitty!' he cried.

"Kitty stood one moment, with eyes that seemed to pierce to his very heart, then she turned to the splashing waters and pointed solemnly.

"'Elihu, where is Elihu?' she asked; and in that moment, when Joel hung his head before her without a word of answer, Kitty fell down like a dead thing at his feet.

"And I, who knew her so well, I tell you that Kitty died there on that meadow by the race, just twenty year ago to-day.

"Joel, you ask? What come to Joel? Well, p'raps he felt bad just at first, for he went away for two, three year, I believe. But he come back, did Joel, and Kitty never molested him by word or deed. You can see his house there below the mill; he's married long since and his house is full of children. But never, since that June night twenty year ago, has he dared set foot at the old homestead. Folks talked—of course they talked—but Kitty, the staid, sad woman they called Kitty, heeded nothing that was said. Joel, he tried to right himself and writ her many a long letter at the first.

"'It was a fair wrestle,' said he, 'and him as was beaten was to leave the place and not come back for months or years. Elihu was beat on the wrestle and he's gone; that's all there is to it.'

"Kitty, she never answered them letters; she remembered that uplifted arm as the vast shadows swayed towards her on the meadow, and Joel, he give it up."

By this time the heavy hay-waggons began to move across the meadows. It was drawing near supper-time and the speaker rose and briskly set aside her knitting.

"I believe that's all," she said. "It's a tragic story for a country

place like this. But now set down, won't you, and wait till the men come up for supper? Mebbe you'll be glad of a cup of tea before you go any further."

The stranger, well within the shade of the clustering vines, made no reply.

"Say," cried she, from the porch door; "set down and wait for supper, won't you?"

Surprised at the silence, accustomed as she was to the garrulity of country neighbours, she stepped out into the piazza. A beautiful woman she, of forty years, whose fine face seemed now set in an aureole of sunbeams. The stranger took off his hat and stooped somewhat towards her; there was something familiar in the gesture, which set the wild blood throbbing at her heart-strings as though the past twenty years had been a dream.

"Kitty, my dear love, Kitty."

The farm men came singing up the lane, the heavy waggons grinding slowly along in the sunshine. All this, the everyday life, was now the dream, and they, Kitty and Elihu, had met in the meadow lands of the earthly Paradise.

A MEMORY.

How much of precious joy, that leaves no pain,
  Lives in the simple memory of a face
  Once seen, and only for a little space,
And never after to be seen again:
A face as fair as, on an altar pane,
  A pictured window in some holy place—
  The glowing lineaments of immortal grace,
In many a vague ideal sought in vain.
Such face was yours, and such the joy to me,
  Who saw you once, once only, and by chance,
And cherished evermore in memory
  The noble beauty of your countenance—
The poet's natural language in your looks,
Sweet as the wondrous sweetness of your books.

GEORGE COTTERELL.

AUNT PHŒBE'S HEIRLOOMS.

An Experience in Hypnotism.

WE do not take to new ideas readily in Bishopsthorpe. Our fashions are always at least one season behind the times; it is only by a late innovation in Post Office regulations that we are now enabled to get our London papers on the day of their publication; and a craze, social or scientific, has almost been forgotten by the fashionable world before it manages to establish any kind of footing in our midst.

It therefore came upon us with more or less of a shock one morning a short time ago to find the walls of our sleepy little country town placarded with flaming posters announcing that Professor Dmitri Sclamowsky intended to visit Bishopsthorpe on the following Friday, for the purpose of exhibiting in the Town Hall some of his marvellous powers in Thought Reading, Mesmerism, and Hypnotism.

Stray rumours from time to time, and especially of late, had visited us of strange experiments in connection with these outlandish sciences, if sciences they can be called; but we had received these with incredulity, mingled with compassion for such weak-minded persons as could be easily duped by the clever conjuring of paid charlatans.

This, at least, was very much the mental attitude of my aunt Phœbe, and it was only under strong pressure from me and one or two others of her younger and more enterprising section of Bishopsthorpe society that she at last reluctantly consented to patronise the Professor's performance in person.

Even at the last moment she almost failed us.

"I am getting too old a woman, my dear Elizabeth," she said to me as I was helping her to dress, "to leave my comfortable fireside after dinner for the sake of seeing second-rate conjuring."

"Indeed, it is good of you," I said, as I disposed a piece of soft old point lace in graceful folds round the neck of her black velvet dress; "but virtue will be its own reward, for I am sure you will enjoy it as much as any of us, and as for being too old, that is all nonsense! Just look in the glass, and then say if you have a heart to cheat Bishopsthorpe of a sight of you in all your glory."

"You are a silly girl, Elizabeth!" said my aunt, and yet she did as I suggested, and, walking up to the long pier-glass, looked at her reflection with a well pleased smile. "Indeed," she continued, turning back to me to where I stood by the dressing-table, "I think I am as silly as you are, to rig myself out like this," and she pointed to the double row of large single diamonds I had clasped round her

neck, and the stars of the same precious stones which twinkled and flashed in the lace of her cap.

"Come, Aunt Phœbe," I said, drawing down her hands, which had made a movement as though she would have taken off the glittering gauds, "you don't often give the good Bishopsthorpe folk a chance of admiring the Anstruther heirlooms. They look so lovely! Don't take them off, *please*. What is the use of having beautiful things if they are always to be hidden away in a jewellery case? There now," I went on; "I hear the carriage at the door; here is your fur cloak: you must wrap yourself up well for it is a cold night," and so saying I muffled her up, and hustled her downstairs before she could remonstrate, even had she wished to do so.

The little Town Hall was already crowded when we arrived, but seats had been reserved for us in one of the front rows of benches. Many eyes were turned on us as we made our way to our places, for Aunt Phœbe was looked up to as one of the cornerstones of aristocracy in Bishopsthorpe, and I fancied that I caught an expression of relief on the faces of some of those present, who, until the entertainment had been sanctioned by her presence, had probably felt doubtful as to its complete orthodoxy. But of course I may have been wrong. Aunt Phœbe is always telling me I am too imaginative.

It seemed as though the Professor had awaited our arrival to begin the performance, for we had hardly taken our seats than the curtain, which had hitherto hidden the stage from our view, rolled up and discovered the Professor standing with his hand resting upon an easel, on which was placed a large blackboard.

I think the general feeling in the room was that of disappointment. I know that I, for one, had hoped to see something more interesting than the usual paraphernalia of a lecture on astronomy or geology.

Professor Sclamowsky, too, was not at all as impressive a person as his name had led me to expect. He was short and thick-set. His close-cropped hair was of the undecided colour which fair hair assumes when it is beginning to turn grey, and a heavy moustache of the same uninteresting hue hid his mouth. His jaw was heavy and slightly underhung, and his neck was thick and coarse.

Altogether his appearance was remarkably unprepossessing and commonplace.

In a short speech, spoken with a slight foreign accent, which some way or other struck me as being assumed, he begged to disclaim all intention of *conjuring*. His performance was solely and entirely a series of experiments in and illustrative of the wonderful science of Hypnotism; a science still in its infancy, but destined to take its place among the most marvellous of modern discoveries.

As he spoke, his heavy, uninteresting face lit up as with a hidden enthusiasm, and my attention was attracted to his eyes, which I had not before noticed. They were of a curious bright metallic blue and

are the only eyes I have ever seen, though one reads and hears so perpetually of them, which really seemed to flash as he warmed to his subject.

As he finished, I looked at Aunt Phœbe, who shrugged her shoulders and smiled incredulously. It was clear that she was not going to be imposed upon by his specious phrases.

It would be unnecessary to weary my readers by describing at length how the usual preliminary of choosing an unbiassed committee was gone through; nor how, after the doctor, the rector, Mr. Melton (the principal draper in Bishopsthorpe) and several other of the town magnates, all men of irreproachable honesty, had been induced to act in this capacity, the Professor proceeded, with eyes blindfolded and holding the doctor's hand in his, to find a carefully hidden pin, to read the number of a bank-note and to write the figures one by one on the blackboard, and to perform other experiments of the same kind amid the breathless interest of the audience.

I frankly admit that I was astonished and bewildered by what I saw, and I had a little uneasy feeling that if it were not all a piece of gigantic humbug, it was not quite canny—not quite right.

What struck me most, I think, was the unfussy, untheatrical way in which it was all done. Every one of the Professor's movements was marked by an air of calm certainty. He threaded his way through the crowded benches with such an unhesitating step that, only that I had seen the bandage fastened over his eyes by the rector and afterwards carefully examined by the doctor, neither of whom could be suspected of complicity, I should have said he must have had some little peep-hole arranged to enable him to guide his course so unfalteringly.

There were, of course, thunders of applause from the sixpenny seats when the Thought Reading part of the entertainment came to an end.

"Well, Aunt Phœbe," I said, turning to her as the Professor bowed his thanks, "what do you think?"

"Think, my dear?" she repeated. "I think the man is a very fair conjurer."

"But," I protested, "how could he know where the pin was; and you know Mr. Danby himself fastened the handkerchief?"

"My dear Elizabeth, I have seen Houdin do far more wonderful things, when I was a girl; but he had the honesty to call it by its right name—conjuring."

I had not time to carry on the discussion, for the Professor now reappeared and informed us that by far the most interesting part of the performance was still to come. Thought Reading and Mesmerism, or, as some people preferred to call it—Hypnotism—were, he believed, different parts of the same wonderful and but very partially-understood power. A power so little understood as not even to possess a distinctive name; a power which he believed to be latent

in everybody, but which was capable of being brought to more or less perfection, according to the amount of care and attention bestowed upon it. "I," said the Professor, "have given my life to it." And again I fancied I saw the curious blue eyes flash with a sudden unexpected fire.

"In the experiments which I am about to show you," he went on, "I am assisted by my daughter, Anna Sclamowsky," and, drawing back a curtain at the back of the stage, he led forward a girl who looked to be between sixteen and eighteen years old.

There was no sort of family resemblance between father and daughter. She was tall and slight, with a small dark head prettily poised on a long, slender neck. Her face was pale, and her large dark eyes had a startled, frightened look as she gazed at the sea of strange faces below her. Her father placed her in a chair facing us all; and turning once more to the audience said:

"I shall now, with your kind permission, put my daughter into a mesmeric or hypnotic trance; and while she is in it, I hope to show you some particularly interesting experiments. Look at me, Anna—so——"

He placed his fingers for a moment on her eyelids, and then stood aside. Except that the girl was now perfectly motionless, and that her gaze was unnaturally fixed, I could see nothing different in her appearance from what it had been a few moments before.

The Professor now turned to Mr. Danby, who was seated beside me, and said, "If this gentleman will oblige me by stepping up on the stage, he can assure himself by any means he may choose to use, that my daughter is in a perfectly unconscious state at this moment; and if it will give the audience and himself any more confidence in the sincerity of this experiment, he is perfectly at liberty to blindfold her. Then if he will be kind enough to go through the room and touch here and there any person he may fancy, my daughter, at a word from me, will in the same order and in the same manner touch each of those already touched. I myself will, during the whole of the time, stand at the far end of the hall, so that there can be no sort of communication between us."

So saying, Sclamowsky left the stage, and walking down the room, placed himself with his back against the wall, and fixed his gaze upon the motionless form of his daughter.

As I looked back at him, even though separated from him by the length of the hall, I could see the strange glitter and flash of his eyes. It gave me an uncomfortable, uneasy feeling; and I turned my face again towards the stage, where the good-natured rector was following out the directions he had received.

He lifted Anna Sclamowsky's arm, which, on his relaxing his hold, fell limp and lifeless by her side; he snapped his fingers suddenly close before her wide-open eyes without producing even a quiver of a muscle in her set face. He shouted in her ear; shook her by the

shoulders; but all without succeeding in making her show any sign of consciousness. He then tied a handkerchief over her eyes; and, leaving the stage, went about through the room, touching people here and there as he went, pursuing a most tortuous course, and ended at last by placing his hand upon Aunt Phœbe's diamond necklace. He then bowed to the Professor to intimate that we were ready to see the conclusion of the experiment.

Sclamowsky moved forward about a pace, beckoned with his hand, and called, not loudly but distinctly, "Anna!"

Without a moment's hesitation the girl, still blindfolded, rose, walked swiftly down the steps which led from the stage to the floor of the hall, and with startling exactness reproduced Mr. Danby's actions. In and out through the benches she passed amid a silence of breathless interest, touching each person in exactly the same spot as Mr. Danby had done a few minutes previously.

I saw Aunt Phœbe drawing herself up rigidly as Anna Sclamowsky came towards our bench and, amid deafening applause, laid her finger upon the Anstruther diamonds. The clapping and noise produced no effect upon the girl. She stood motionless as though she had been a statue, her hand still upon the necklace.

Whether Aunt Phœbe was aggravated by the complete success of the experiment or annoyed at having been obliged to take so prominent a part in it, I do not know, but she certainly was a good deal out of temper; for when Sclamowsky made his way to where his daughter was standing, she said, in tones of icy disapproval, which must have been audible for a long way down the room—

"A very clever piece of imposture, sir."

The mesmerist's face flushed and his eyes flashed angrily. He, however, bowed low.

"There's nothing so hard," he said, "to overcome, madam, as prejudice. I fear you have been inconvenienced by my daughter's hand. I will now release her—and you."

So saying, he placed his own hand for a moment over his daughter's and breathed lightly on the girl's face. Instantly the muscles relaxed, her hand fell to her side, and I could hear her give a little shuddering sigh, apparently of relief.

I noticed, too, that, whether by design or accident Sclamowsky kept his hand for a moment longer on my aunt's necklace, and as he took his finger away, I fancied that he looked at her fixedly for a second, and muttered something either to himself or her, the meaning of which I could not catch.

"What did he say to you?" I asked, as Sclamowsky, after removing the bandage from his daughter's eyes, assisted her to remount the stage.

Aunt Phœbe looked a little confused and dazed, and her hand went up to her necklace, as though to reassure herself of its safety.

"Say to me?" she repeated, rousing herself as though by an effort;

"he said nothing to me. But I think, Elizabeth, if it is the same to you, we will go home; the heat of the room has made me feel a little dizzy."

We heard next day that we had missed the best part of the entertainment by leaving when we did, and that many and far more wonderful experiments were successfully attempted; but I had no time to waste in vain regrets for not having been present, for I was much taken up with Aunt Phœbe.

I was really anxious about her; she was so strangely unlike her calm, equable self. All Saturday she was restless and irritable, wandering half way upstairs, and then as though she had forgotten what she wanted, returning to the drawing-room, where she set to work opening old cabinet drawers, looking under chairs and sofas, tumbling everything out of her work-box as if in search of something, and snubbing me for my pains when I offered to help her.

This went on all day, and I had almost made up my mind to send for Dr. Perkins, when, after late dinner, she suddenly sank into an arm-chair with a look of relief.

"I know what it is," she said; "it is my diamonds!"

"Your diamonds, Aunt Phœbe!" I exclaimed. "Why, I locked them up for you myself in your dressing-box when we came home last night!"

"Are you sure, Elizabeth?" she asked with an anxious, worried expression.

"Quite sure," I answered; "but if it will satisfy you, I will bring down your dressing-box now and let you see."

"Do, there's a dear child! I declare I feel too tired to move another step."

I was not surprised at this, considering how she had been fussing about all day, and I ran up to her bed-room, brought down her rose-wood dressing-box and placed it on the table in front of her.

I was greatly struck by the nervous trembling of her fingers as she chose out the right key from amongst the others in her bunch, and the shaky way in which she fitted it into the lock. Even when she had turned the key she seemed half afraid to raise the lid, so I did it for her, and, taking out the first tray, lifted out the morocco case which contained the heirlooms and laid it in her lap.

Aunt Phœbe tremblingly touched the spring, the case flew open and disclosed the diamonds lying snugly on their bed of blue velvet. She took them out and looked at them lovingly, held them up so that they might catch the light from the lamp, and then with a sigh replaced them in their case and shut it with a snap.

I waited for a few minutes, then, as she did not speak, I put out my hand for the case, intending to replace it in the dressing-box and take it upstairs. But Aunt Phœbe clutched it tightly, staggered to her feet and said in a husky, unnatural voice, "No, I must take it myself."

"Why, you said you were too tired!" I began, but before I could finish my sentence she had left the room, and I heard her going upstairs and opening the door of her bed-room.

Some few minutes afterwards I heard her steps once more on the stairs, and I waited, expecting her every moment to open the drawing-room door and walk in; but to my astonishment I heard her pass by, and a moment afterwards the clang of the front door as it was hastily shut told me that Aunt Phœbe had left the house.

"She must be mad!" I exclaimed to myself as I rushed to the hall, seized up the first hat I could see, flung a shawl over my shoulders, and tore off in pursuit of my runaway relative.

It was quite dark, but I caught sight of her as she passed by a lamp-post. She was walking quickly, quicker than I had ever seen her walk before, and with evidently some set purpose in her mind. I ran after her as fast as I could, and came up with her as she was turning down a small dark lane leading, as I knew, to a little court, the home of a very poor but respectable section of the inhabitants of Bishops-thorpe.

"Aunt Phœbe," I gasped as I touched her arm, "where are you going? You must be making a mistake!"

"No, no!" she cried, with a feverish impatience in her voice. "I am right! quite right! You must not stop me!" and she quickened her pace into a halting run.

I saw clearly that there was nothing to be done but to follow her and try to keep her out of actual harm's way, for there now seemed to be no manner of doubt that my poor aunt was, for the time at any rate, insane. So I fell back a pace, and, never appearing even to notice that I had left her side, she pursued her course.

Suddenly she stopped short, crossed the street and stumbled up the uneven stone steps of a shabby-looking house, whose front door was wide open. Without a moment's hesitation she entered the dark hall, and I followed closely at her heels. Up the squalid, dirty stairs she hurried, and, without knocking, opened a door on the left-hand side of the first landing and went in.

I was a few steps behind, but as I gained the threshold I saw her take a parcel from beneath her cloak and hold it out to a man who came to meet her from the far end of the badly-lighted room.

"I have brought them," I heard my aunt say in the same curious husky voice I had noticed before.

As the man came nearer and stood where the light of the evil-smelling little paraffin lamp fell upon his features, I recognised in the heavy jaw, the bull-neck and the close-cropped head, the Professor Dmitri Sclamowsky of the previous evening. Our eyes met, and I thought I detected a start of not altogether pleased surprise; but if this were so he recovered himself quickly and bowing low, said:

"I had not expected the pleasure of *your* company, madam, but as

you have done me the honour of coming, I am glad that you should be here to witness the conclusion of last night's experiment. This lady," he continued, pointing to my aunt, who still stood with fixed, apparently unseeing eyes, holding out the parcel towards him—"this lady, you will remember, considered the hypnotic phenomena exhibited at last night's entertainment as a clever imposture—those were the words, I think. To one who, like myself, is an enthusiast on the subject, such words were hard, nay, impossible to bear. It was necessary to prove to her that the power I possess"—here his blue eyes gleamed with the same metallic light I had before noticed —"is something more than *conjuring;* something more than a 'clever imposture.' You will see now."

As he spoke he stretched out his hand and took the parcel from my aunt, and as he did so, I recognised with horror the morocco case which I knew contained the heirlooms.

"Who are these for?" he said, addressing Aunt Phœbe.

"For you," came from my aunt's lips, but her eyes were fixed and her voice seemed to come with difficulty.

"She is mad!" I exclaimed. "She does not know what she is saying!"

Sclamowsky smiled.

"And who am I?" he continued, still addressing my aunt.

"The Professor Dmitri Sclamowsky."

"And what is this?" indicating the morocco case.

"My diamonds."

"You make them a present to me?"

"Yes."

Sclamowsky opened the case and took out the jewels.

"A handsome present, certainly!" he said, turning to me with a smile.

I was speechless. There was something so horrible in my dear Aunt Phœbe's set face and wide open, stony eyes, something so weird in the dim room, with its one miserable lamp; something so mockingly fiendish in Sclamowsky's glittering eyes as he stood with the diamonds flashing and twinkling in his hands, that though I strove for utterance, I could not succeed in articulating a single word.

"Enough!" at last he said, replacing the diamonds in their case and closing it sharply—"the experiment is concluded," and so saying he stepped up close to Aunt Phœbe and made two or three passes with his hands in front of her face. A quiver ran all over my aunt's figure. She swayed and would have fallen if I had not rushed forward and caught her in my arms.

She looked round at me with terror and bewilderment in every feature.

"Where am I, Elizabeth?" she stammered, and then looking round she caught sight of Sclamowsky. "What is the meaning of this?"

"Never mind, Aunt Phœbe," I said. "Come home, and I will tell you all about it."

Aunt Phœbe passed her hand over her eyes, and as she did so I glanced inquiringly from Sclamowsky's face to the jewellery case in his hands. What was to be the end of it all? I had certainly heard my aunt distinctly give this man her diamonds as a present, but could a gift made under such circumstances hold good for a moment? He evidently saw the query in my face.

"You judge me even more hastily than did your aunt," he said. "She called me an impostor; you think me a rogue and a swindler. Here are your jewels, madam," he said, turning to Aunt Phœbe. "I shall be more than satisfied if the result of this evening's experiment prove to you that, as your poet says, 'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'"

'I don't understand it all," said Aunt Phœbe piteously, as she mechanically took the morocco case into her hands.

"Don't try to do so now," I said. "You must come home with me as quickly as you can;" for I was feverishly anxious to escape from this house—from this man with this horrible, terrifying power.

He bowed silently to us as I hurried Aunt Phœbe out of the room; but as I was going down the stairs an irresistible impulse came over me to look back.

He was standing on the landing, politely holding the little lamp so that we might see our way down the uneven, irregular stairs, and the light fell upon his face. Was the expression I saw upon it one of triumph, or one of defeated dishonesty? I could not say. Even now, though I have thought it all over and over till my head has got dazed and confused, I cannot make up my mind whether he had hoped, by means of his strange mesmeric power, to obtain possession of the Anstruther diamonds—a design only frustrated by my unlooked-for appearance—or whether his action was altogether prompted by a determination to demonstrate and vindicate the truth of the phenomena connected with his science.

Sometimes I lean to one view, sometimes to the other. I have now told the facts of the case simply and without exaggeration just as they occurred, and my readers must judge for themselves whether Dmitri Sclamowsky was, in the matter of Aunt Phœbe's heirlooms, a disappointed swindler or a triumphant enthusiast.

SAINT OR SATAN.

A STORY, strange as true—a story to the truth of which half the inhabitants of the good city of Turin can bear testimony.

Have you ever been to Turin, by the way? To that city which reminds one of nothing so much as a gigantic chess-board set down upon the banks of the yellow river—that city with never-ending, straight streets, all running at right angles to each other, and whose extremities frame in delicious pictures of wooded hill or snow-capped Alp; whose inhabitants recall the grace and courtesy of the Parisians, joined to a good spicing of their wit and humour; whose dialect is three-parts French pronounced as it is written; and whose force and frankness strike you with a special charm after the ha-haing of the Florentines, the sonorousness of the Romans and the sing-song of the Neapolitans; to say nothing of the hideousness of the Genoese and the chaos of the Sicilians; that city of kindly greetings and hearty welcome?

Well, if you have given Turin a fair trial, you will know what a pleasant place it is; if you have not, I advise you to do so upon the first occasion that may present itself.

The climate is described by some emulator of Thomson to consist of "Tre mesi d'Inferno, nove d'inverno." But then you must remember that Turin houses are provided with chimneys, and Turin floors with carpets, and that no one who does not wish it is forced—as so many of us have been—to shiver upon marble pavement and be half suffocated by a charcoal-brazier. No refuge from the cold save that, one's bed, or sitting in a church. And one can neither lie for ever in bed, nor sit the day through in a church, however fine it may be.

It is extremely healthy, however, and altogether one of the pleasantest towns in Italy to live in. It has, too, one of the fairest gardens in Europe: the Valentino, with its old red-brick palace, its elms, its lawns, its river and setting, on one side, of lovely hills. Lady Mary W. Montagu speaks of the beauty of this garden in her day. I think she would scarcely recognise it at the present. Modern art has done its best, and over the whole yet lingers the mysterious charm of the Past; the dark historical legends connected with the palace and its quondam frail, fair, and, I regret to add, ferocious mistress, its——But what has all this to do with "Saint or Satan," you will ask? Where is your promised story?

Well, Satan enters somewhat largely into the story of the Valentino which I will relate you at some future time; and, as to the part, if any, his dark Majesty had in what I am going to tell you to-day, you yourself must judge, reader. I am inclined to think *he had* a

claw in the matter, rather than Saint Antonio to whom the miracle is ascribed. The miracle! Yes, the miracle. And if you could see her, you would certainly say that a miracle of some kind there certainly was.

I have, after long consideration and study, come to the conclusion that "Old Maids" are, generally speaking, a very pleasant, kind-hearted portion of society. They may be a little irritable and restive while standing upon the border-land that divides the marriageable from the un-marriageable age; but that boundary once passed, they take place among the worthiest and best. And surely their anxiety as to the reply to the question of "Miss or Mrs.?" is pardonable. Matrimony means an utter change of life to a woman; while to a man it is of infinitely less import.

I am afraid I cannot class the "Signorina Guiseppina Pace" as having formed one of the pleasant section of old maids; I must even, however reluctantly, place her among the decidedly unpleasant ones. "Peace"—"Pace" was her name, but her old mother, with whom she lived, would have told you that she differed greatly from her name.

So do most of us, indeed; and I am sure you have only to run over the list of your friends in the kindliest manner to see that I am right in my affirmation.

Perhaps Miss Guiseppina thought that one can have too much of even a good thing; that the name of Pace was quite enough for the house, and that, in consequence, she ought to do her best to banish it under all other circumstances. She certainly succeeded; for she led her poor old widow-mother and their single servant such a life as to give them a lively foretaste of what Purgatory—to say no worse—might possibly be.

Ah! if she could but have cut off the Pace from her own name as cleanly as she cut off all possible peace from the two poor women who were doomed, for their sins, to live under the same roof with her.

But, despite the endeavours during thirty odd long years, she had never had one single chance of doing so; and it riled her to the core. Schoolfellows had floated away upon the sea of matrimony; friends had become mothers—grandmothers—and yet she remained Guiseppina Pace, as she ever had remained; and with no prospect of a change.

How she learned to loathe the sight of a bridal procession, and how she taught mother and maid to tremble at the passing of the same! How the news of a projected marriage stirred her bile, and how her dearest friends hastened to her with any matrimonial news they could gather, or invent! It was wonderful to see, and pleasant enough to witness—from a distance.

Guiseppina and her mother occupied a small flat in Via Santa Teresa: Guiseppina's bed-room and their one sitting-room looking into the street; her mother's room, the kitchen and a sort of cock-hole in which the servant slept being at the back of the house.

It was summer. People pushed perspiringly for the shady side of the street, puffed and panted under pillar and portico. The public gardens were besieged; fans fluttered everywhere; iced-beer and pezzi duri were in constant requisition.

It was on a Friday afternoon. Guiseppina had sunk, exhausted with the heat and exasperated with the flies, into a large arm-chair opposite her bed, and was sitting there fanning herself violently and trying to catch a breath of fresh air from the widely-opened window beside her. But there was no air, fresh or otherwise; and nothing but the languid steps of the passers in the street below was heard. Not the roll of a wheel, the hoof of a horse, or the yelp of a dog. It seemed as if the whole place had been given over to the cruel glare of sunshine and the persevering impertinence of flies.

It was just one of those days which make one long intensely for the shade of ilexes upon the sea shore, and the swish of idle waters upon the beach.

And Guiseppina *did* long, and *had* longed, and had finally driven her poor mother in tears to her room with reproaches for not being able to go for a month to Pegli, as, that very morning, their upper floor neighbours, the Castelles, had gone—and—and—and—: the usual litany—the usual nagging—the usual temper; hinc ille lacrimæ.

"Why should she alone," she exclaimed to herself sitting there, "remain to roast in town, while all her friends—? Ah, it was too cruel! If she could only—!"

Her eyes fell upon the little picture of Saint Antonio hanging over her bed—the Saint credited with presiding over marriages—the Saint to which, through all these long years, Guiseppina had daily appealed and prayed. Alas, all in vain! Not the shadow of a lover had he sent her—not the ghost of an offer had he vouchsafed her in return for all her tears and tapers.

She looked across at the Saint, this time with a scowl, however. The Saint seemed to return her gaze with a mocking smile. No! That was indeed adding insult to injury! After thirty years unswerving devotion, to mock at her thus!

She didn't say thirty years, mind, though she could have added somewhat to the figure without risking a fib. She said something else, a something that didn't sound exactly like a blessing; and, in a sudden fit of rage, started from her seat, sprang across the room, tore the offending Saint from the nail from which he had dangled for such long years, and, without further ceremony, flung him out through the open window into the street below.

Then, aghast at what she had done, she stood as if turned to stone, not daring to go to the window to see what the effect of her novel proceeding might have been.

Minutes, to her ages, passed: then came a ring at the bell. Answer she must; the maid was out marketing, her mother in tears—for it might be the post—it might be—! Ah, she shivered

as she thought thereon—it might be a municipal guard with a "contravenzione"—fine; for in Italy one cannot now fling even saints from a window down upon the passers' heads with impunity. Time was when worse things were periodically showered down upon passengers, but, thanks to government and wholesome laws, nous avons changé tout cela.

With a beating heart Guiseppina drew the bolt and opened the door. There on the landing stood, not a policeman, but an elderly gentleman, his hat in one hand, Saint Antonio in the other, and his bald head looming out from the gloom—some Turin stairs are *very* dark—like the moon in a fog.

"Signora"—he began in a hesitating voice, and holding forward the imperturbable Saint as a shield and excuse for his intrusion ——

"Signore," replied the ancient maiden, gazing forth at her visitor with wonder on her face and relief in her heart.

The relief fled quickly, however, for she suddenly remembered that many of the police were said to prowl about in civil clothes and inflict no end of fines, of which they pocketed a part.

But he didn't look a bit like a policeman. So she smiled upon him, and listened benignantly to his tale. He had been passing the house—musing upon his business—that of a broker—and trying to guess at the truth of a report relative to certain investments, when suddenly his calculations had been put to flight by the arrival of some unseen object from on high, which, after alighting upon the crown of his Panama, fell at his feet.

Here a wave of his hand and a flourish of the Saint indicated his having picked up the same.

He then proceeded to relate his having looked up—the Saint could only have come from Heavenward, he had perched so exactly upon the crown of his hat—having seen the open window—all the rest in the house were closed—and having taken the liberty——

Here another wave of the hand, followed by a bow.

And then, at this juncture, Signora Pace came out from her room, and she, after being informed of the cause of her daughter's being found in close converse upon the landing with a stranger of the male sex, asked the said stranger in. Her invitation being accepted, the trio adjourned to the sitting-room, the gallant knight still retaining his trophy.

Only after being warmly pressed to do so by Signora Pace did the all-unexpected and unknown visitor deposit Saint Antonio upon the centre table, and take his seat upon the red rep sofa next to her.

Guiseppina sat facing him. She seemed suddenly to have quite changed—never once snubbed her mother, and appeared throughout all sugar and sweetness.

We can suppose that remorse at having treated her Saint after this fashion, and relief at his not having fallen into the hands of a policeman, as she at first had most reasonably feared, had worked the change.

Policeman, indeed! Signor Cesare Garelli—such the visitor gave as his name—appeared to her to be quite a charming person. To be sure, he was bald, but that mattered little. So was Julius Cæsar and a host of other great men.

Cesare Garelli was something, to her, infinitely more interesting than his great namesake ever had been. He was a partner of the well-known Zucco, and the office they kept in Via Carlo Alberto had wooden cups of gold nuggets, no end of glittering coins and crisp bank-notes of foreign and formidable appearance, in its solitary window. More than once she had longingly halted before its treasures.

So a vast deal of information was exchanged on both sides, and when Signor Cesare Garelli rose to go, the flood of golden sunshine had crept quite across to the other side of the street.

Apparently some of it had crept into Guiseppina's heart also, for she refrained from flying out when the long-delayed "minestra" turned out to be smoked, and she even went so far as to give Saint Antonio a chaste kiss as she restored him to the crooked nail to which he had hung for so long a time.

Cesare Garelli's visits became more and more frequent in Via Santa Teresa. Then followed excursions to Rivoli, to Superza, to Moncalieri. Nice little dinners, and evenings spent at the Caffe San Carlo or under the horse-chestnuts in the Valentino garden, succeeded rapidly. La Signora Pace's life savoured of the seventh heaven, and Guiseppina's temper grew mellow as the peaches which her admirer was for ever sending her.

That phase passed away, and then one fine day Cesare Garelli burst forth in all the glory and radiance of a declared and accepted lover.

In less than three months from the date of Saint Antonio's flight through the window into the hot, dusty street, Guiseppina voluntarily —oh, how voluntarily!—renounced the name of Pace for ever and took that of Garelli.

If you want to know if Saint or Satan made his match for him, you had better ask Cesare Garelli himself. I cannot tell you.

A. Beresford.

IN A BERNESE VALLEY.

I MET her by this mountain stream
  At twilight's fall long years gone by,
While, rosy with day's afterbeam,
  Yon snow-peaks glowed against the sky ;

And she was but a simple maid
  Who fed her goats among the hills,
And sang her songs within the glade,
  And caught the music of the rills ;

And drank the fragrance of the flowers
  That bloomed within love-haunted dells ;
And wandered home in gloaming hours,
  Amid the sound of tinkling bells.

And now I'm in this vale again,
  And once more hear the tinkling sound ;
But yet 'tis not the same as when
  That maiden 'mid her flock I found.

And still the rosy light of morn
  Steals soft o'er mount and stream and tree ;
And yet I hear the Alpine horn,
  But the old charm is lost to me ;

For I would see that angel face,
  And hear again the simple tale
Which to that twilight lent the grace
  That changed this to Arcadian vale.

It cannot be : my dream is o'er ;
  No more among the hills she'll roam ;
No more she'll sing the songs of yore ;
  Or call the weary cattle home ;

For she is in her bed of rest,
  Encompassed all with gentians blue,
With Edelweiss upon her breast,
  And by her head wild thyme and rue.

Sweet *Angelus*, from yon church-tower,
  That floatest now so soft and clear,
Ring back again that golden hour
  When I still sat beside her here !

ALEXANDER LAMONT.

R. TAYLOR.

M. L. GOW.

HE CAME BACK IN A FEW MINUTES, BUT SO TRANSFORMED IN OUTWARD APPEARANCE THAT DUCIE SCARCELY KNEW HIM.

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1891.

THE FATE OF THE HARA DIAMOND.

CHAPTER IX.

AT "THE GOLDEN GRIFFIN."

CAPTAIN EDMUND DUCIE was one of the first to emerge from the wreck. He crept out of the broken window of the crushed-up carriage, and shook himself as a dog might have done "Once more a narrow squeak for life," he said, half aloud. "If I had been worth ten thousand a-year, I should infallibly have been smashed. Not being worth ten brass farthings, here I am. What has become of my little Russian, I wonder?"

No groan or cry emanated from that portion of the broken carriage out of which Captain Ducie had just crept. Could it be possible that Platzoff was killed?

With considerable difficulty Ducie managed to wrench open the smashed door. Then he called the Russian by name; but there was no answer. He could discern nothing inside save a confused heap of rugs and minor articles of luggage. Under these, enough in themselves to smother him, Platzoff must be lying. One by one these articles were fished out of the carriage, and thrown aside by Ducie. Last of all he came to Platzoff, lying in a heap, white and insensible, as one already dead.

Putting forth all his great strength, Ducie lifted the senseless body out of the carriage as carefully and tenderly as though it were that of a new-born child. He then saw that the Russian was bleeding from an ugly jagged wound at the back of his head. There was no trace of any other outward hurt. A faint pulsation of the heart told that he was still alive.

On looking round, Ducie saw that there was a large country tavern only a few hundred yards from the scene of the accident. Towards this house, which announced itself to the world under the title of "The Golden Griffin," he now hastened with long measured strides, carrying the still insensible Russian in his arms. In all, some half-

dozen carriages had come over the embankment. The shrieks and cries of the wounded passengers were something appalling. Already the passengers in the fore part of the train, who had escaped unhurt, together with the officials and a few villagers who happened to be on the spot, were doing their best to rescue these unfortunates from the terrible wreckage in which they were entangled.

Captain Ducie was the first man from the accident to cross the threshold of "The Golden Griffin." He demanded to be shown the best spare room in the house. On the bed in this room he laid the body of the still insensible Platzoff. His next act was to despatch a mounted messenger for the nearest doctor. Then, having secured the services of a brisk, steady-nerved chambermaid, he proceeded to dress the wound as well as the means at his command would allow of —washing it, and cutting away the hair, and, by means of some ice, which he was fortunate enough to procure, succeeding in all but stopping the bleeding, which, to a man so frail of body, so reduced in strength as Platzoff, would soon have been fatal. A teaspoonful of brandy administered at brief intervals did its part as a restorative, and some minutes before the doctor's arrival Ducie had the satisfaction of seeing his patient's eyes open, and of hearing him murmur faintly a few soft guttural words in some language which the Captain judged to be his native Russ.

Platzoff had quite recovered his senses by the time the doctor arrived, but was still too feeble to do more than whisper a few unconnected words. There were many claimants this forenoon on the doctor's attention, and the services required by Platzoff at his hand had to be performed as expeditiously as possible.

"You must make up your mind to be a guest of 'The Golden Griffin' for at least a week to come," he said, as he took up his hat preparatory to going. "With quiet, and care, and a strict adherence to my instructions, I daresay that by the end of that time you will be sufficiently recovered to leave here for your own home. Humanly speaking, sir, you owe your life to this gentleman," indicating Ducie. "But for his skill and promptitude you would have been a dead man before I reached you."

Platzoff's thin white hand was extended feebly. Ducie took it in his sinewy palms and pressed it gently. "You have this day done for me what I can never forget," whispered the Russian, brokenly. Then he closed his eyes, and seemed to sink off into a sleep of exhaustion.

Leaving strict injunctions with the chambermaid not to quit the room till he should come back, Captain Ducie went downstairs with the intention of revisiting the scene of the disaster. He called in at the bar to obtain his favourite "thimbleful" of cognac, and there he found a very agreeable landlady, with whom he got into conversation respecting the accident. Some five minutes had passed thus when the chambermaid came up to him. "If you please, sir, the foreign gentleman has woke up, and is anxiously asking to see you

With a shrug of the shoulders and a slight lowering of his black eyebrows, Captain Ducie went back upstairs. Platzoff's eager eyes fixed him as he entered the room. Ducie sat down close by the bed and said in a kindly tone: "What is it? What can I do for you? Command me in any way."

"My servant — where is he? And — and my despatch box. Valuable papers. Try to find it."

Ducie nodded and left the room. The inquiries he made soon elicited the fact that Platzoff's servant had been even more severely injured than his master, and was at that moment lying, more dead than alive, in a little room upstairs. Slowly and musingly, with hands in pocket, Captain Ducie then took his way towards the scene of the accident. "It may suit my book very well to make friends with this Russian," he thought as he went along. "He is no doubt very rich; and I am very poor. In us the two extremes meet and form the perfect whole. He might serve my purposes in more ways than one, and it is just as likely that his purposes might be served by mine: for a man like that must have purposes that want serving. Nous verrons. Meanwhile, I am his obedient servant to command."

Captain Ducie, hunting about among the débris of the train, was not long in finding the fragments of M. Platzoff's despatch box. Its contents were scattered about. Ducie spent ten minutes in gathering together the various letters and documents which it had contained. Then, with the broken box under his arm and the papers in his hands, he went back to the Russian.

He showed the papers one by one to Platzoff, who was strangely eager in the matter. When Ducie held up the last of them, Platzoff groaned and shut his eyes. "They are all there as far as I can judge," he murmured, "except the most important one of all—a paper covered with figures, of no use to anyone but myself. Oh, dear Captain Ducie! do please go once more and try to find the one that is still missing. If I only knew that it was burnt, or torn into fragments, I should not mind so much. But if it were to fall into the hands of a scoundrel skilful enough to master the secret which it contains, then I ——"

He stopped with a scared look on his face, as though he had unwittingly said more than he had intended.

"Pray don't trouble yourself with any explanations just now," said Ducie. "You want the paper: that is enough. I will go and have a thorough hunt for it."

Back went Ducie to the broken carriages and began to search more carefully than before. "What can be the nature of the great secret, I wonder, that is hidden between the Sibylline leaves I am in search of? If what Platzoff's words implied be true, he who learns it is master of the situation. Would that it were known to me!"

Slowly and carefully, inside and out of the carriage in which he and Platzoff had travelled, Captain Ducie conducted his search. One

by one he again turned over the wraps and different articles of personal luggage belonging to both of them, which had not yet been removed. The first object that rewarded his search was a splendid diamond pin which he remembered having seen in Platzoff's scarf. Ducie picked it up and looked cautiously around. No one was regarding him. "Of the first water and worth a hundred guineas at the very least," he muttered. Then he put it in his waistcoat pocket and went on with his search.

A minute or two later, hidden away under one of the cushions of the carriage, he found what he was looking for: a folded sheet of thick blue paper covered with a complicated array of figures—that and nothing more.

Captain Ducie regarded the recovered treasure with a strange mixture of feelings. His hands trembled slightly; his heart was beating more quickly than usual; his eyes seemed to see and yet not to see the paper in his hands. As one mazed and in deep doubt he stood.

His reverie was broken by the approach of some of the railway officials. The cloud vanished from before his eyes, and he was his cool, imperturbable self in a moment. Heading the long array of figures on the parchment were a few lines of ordinary writing, written however, not in English, but Italian. These few lines Ducie now proceeded to read over more attentively than he had done at the first glance. He was sufficiently master of Italian to be able to translate them without much difficulty. Translated they ran as under:—

"Bon Repos,
"Windermere.

"CARLO MIO,—In the Amsterdam edition of 1698 of *The Confessions of Parthenio the Mystic* occur the passages given below. To your serious consideration, O friend of my heart, I recommend the words. To read them much patience is required. But they are freighted with wisdom, as you will discover long before you reach the end of them, and have a deep significance for that great cause to which the souls of both of us are knit by bonds which in this life can never be severed. When you read these lines, the hand that writes them will be cold in the grave. But Nature allows nothing to be lost, and somewhere in the wide universe the better part of me (the mystic EGO) will still exist; and if there be any truth in the doctrine of the affinity of souls, then shall you and I meet again elsewhere. Till that time shall come—Adieu!

"Thine,
"PAUL PLATZOFF."

Having carefully read these lines twice over, Captain Ducie refolded the paper, put it away in an inner pocket, and buttoned his coat over it. Then he took his way, deep in thought, back to "The Golden Griffin."

The Russian's eager eyes asked him : " What success ? " before he uld say a word.

" I am sorry to say that I have not been able to find the paper," id Captain Ducie in slow, deliberate tones. " I have found some- ing else—your diamond pin, which you appear to have lost out of ur scarf."

Platzoff gazed at him with a sort of blank despair on his saffron e, but a low moan was his only reply. Then he turned his face to e wall and shut his eyes.

Captain Ducie was a patient man, and he waited without speaking a full hour. At the end of that time Platzoff turned, and held t a feeble hand.

" Forgive me, my friend—if you will allow me to call you so," he d. " I must seem horribly ungrateful after all the trouble I have t you to, but I do not feel so. The loss of my MS. affected me so eply for a little while that I could think of nothing else. I shall over it by degrees."

" If I remember rightly," remarked Ducie, " you said that the lost S. was merely a complicated array of figures. Of what possible ue can it be to anyone who may chance to find it ? "

" Of no value whatever," answered Platzoff, " unless they who find hould also be skilful enough to discover the key by which alone it can read ; for, as I may now tell you, there is a hidden meaning in the ires. The finders may or may not make that discovery, but how I to ascertain what is the fact either one way or the other ? For it of such knowledge my sense of security will be gone. I would ost prefer to know for certain that the MS. had been read than be in utter doubt on the point. In the one case I should know what ad to contend against, and could take proper precautionary asures ; in the other, I am left to do battle with a shadow that or may not be able to work me harm."

' Would possession of the information that is contained in the MS. ble anyone to work you harm ? "

' It would to this extent, that it would put them in possession of a rished secret, which—— But why talk of these things ? What one cannot be undone. I can only prepare myself for the worst."

' One moment," said Ducie. ' " I think that after the thorough ch made by me the chances are twenty to one against the MS. being found. But granting that it does turn up, the finder of ill probably be some ignorant navvie or incurious official, without er inclination or ability to master the secret of the cipher."

'en days later M. Platzoff was sufficiently recovered to set out for Repos. At his earnest request Ducie had put off his own ney to stay with him. At another time the ex-Captain might not cared to spend ten days at a forlorn country tavern, even with a Russian ; but as he often told himself he had " his book to

make," and he probably looked upon this as a necessary part of the process. Before they parted, it was arranged that as soon as Ducie should return from Scotland he should go and spend a month at Bon Repos. Then the two shook hands, and each went his own way. As one day passed after another without bringing any tidings of the lost MS., Platzoff's anxiety respecting it seemed to lessen, and by the time he left "The Golden Griffin" he had apparently ceased to trouble his mind any further in the matter.

CHAPTER X.

THE STOLEN MANUSCRIPT.

Captain Edmund Ducie came of a good family. His people were people of mark among the landed gentry of their county, and were well-to-do even for their position. Although only a fourth son, his allowance had been a very handsome one, both while at Cambridge and afterwards during the early years of his life in the army. When of age, he had come into the very nice little fortune, for a fourth son, of nine thousand pounds; and it was known that there would be "something handsome" for him at his father's death. He had a more than ordinary share of good looks; his mind was tolerably cultivated, and afterwards enlarged by travel and service in various parts of the world; in manners and address he was a finished gentleman of the modern school. Yet all these advantages of nature and fortune were in a great measure nullified and rendered of no avail by reason of one fatal defect, of one black speck at the core. In a word, Captain Ducie was a born gambler.

He had gambled when a child in the nursery, or had tried to gamble, for cakes and toys. He had gambled when at school for coppers, pocket-knives, and marbles. He had gambled when at the University, and had felt the claws of the Children of Usury. He gambled away his nine thousand pounds, or such remainder of it as had not been forestalled, when he came of age. Later on, when in the army, and on home allowance again, for his father would not let him starve, he had kept on gambling; so that when, some five years later, his father died, and he dropped in for the "something handsome," two-thirds of it had to be paid down on the nail to make a free man of him again. On the remaining one-third he contrived to keep afloat for a couple of years longer; then, after a season of heavy losses, came the final crash, and Captain Ducie found himself under the necessity of selling his commission, and of retiring into private life.

From this date Captain Ducie was compelled to live by "bleeding" his friends and connections. He was a great favourite among them, and they rallied gallantly to his rescue. But Ducie still gambled, and the best of friends, and the most indulgent of relatives, grew

tired after a time of seeing their cherished gold pieces slip heedlessly through the fingers of the man whom it was intended that they should substantially help, and be lost in the foul atmosphere of a gaming-house. One by one, friend and relative dropped away from the doomed man, till none were left. Little by little the tide of fortune ebbed away from his feet, leaving him stranded high and dry on the cruel shore of impecuniosity, hemmed in by a thousand debts, with the gaunt wolf of beggary staring him in the face.

There was one point about Captain Ducie's gambling that redounded to his credit. No one ever suspected him of cheating. His "run of luck" was so uniformly bad, despite a brief fickle gleam of fortune now and again, which seemed sent only to lure him on to deeper destruction; it was so well known that he had spent two fortunes and alienated all his friends through his passion for the green cloth, that it would have been the height of absurdity to even suspect him of roguery. Indeed, "Ducie's luck" was a proverbial phrase at the whist-tables of his club. He was not a "turf" man, and had no knowledge of horses beyond that legitimate knowledge which every soldier ought to have. His money had all been lost either at cards or roulette. He was one of the most imperturbable of gamblers. Whatever the varying chances of the game might be, no man ever saw him either elated or depressed: he fought with his vizor down.

No man could be more aware of his one besetting weakness, nor of his inability to conquer it, than was Captain Ducie. When he could no longer muster five pounds to gamble with, he would gamble with five shillings. There was a public-house in Southwark to which, poorly dressed, he sometimes went when his funds were low. Here, unknown to the police, a little quiet gambling for small stakes went on from night to night. But however small might be the amount involved, there was the passion, the excitement, the gambling contagion, precisely as at Homburg or Baden; and these it was that made the very salt of Captain Ducie's life.

About six months before we made his acquaintance he had been compelled to leave his pleasant suite of apartments in New Bond Street, and had, since that time, been the tenant of a shabby bed-room in a shabby little out-of-the-way street. When in town he took his meals at his club, and to that address all letters and papers for him were sent. But of late even the purlieus of his club had become dangerous ground. Round the palatial portal duns seemed to hover and flit mysteriously, so that the task of reaching the secure haven of the smoking-room was one of danger and difficulty; while the return voyage to the shabby little bed-room in the shabby little street could be accomplished in safety only by frequent tacking and much skilful pilotage, to avoid running foul of various rocks and quicksands by the way.

But now, after a six weeks' absence in Scotland, Captain Ducie

felt that for a day or two at least he was tolerably safe. He felt like an old fox venturing into the open after the noise of the hunt has died away in the distance, who knows that for a little while he is safe from molestation. How delightful town looked, he thought, after the dull life he had been leading at Stapleton. He had managed to screw another fifty pounds out of Barnstake, and this very evening, the first of his return, he would go to Tom Dawson's rooms and there refresh himself with a little quiet faro or chicken-hazard : very quiet it must of necessity be, unless he saw that it was going to turn out one of his lucky evenings, in which case he would try to "put up" the table and finish with a fortunate coup. But there was one little task that he had set himself to do before going out for the evening, and he proceeded to consider it over while discussing his cup of strong green tea and his strip of dry toast.

To aid him in considering the matter he brought out of an inner pocket the stolen manuscript of M. Platzoff.

While in Scotland, when shut up in his own room of a night, he had often exhumed the MS., and had set himself seriously to the task of deciphering it, only to acknowledge at the end of a terrible half-hour that he was ignominiously beaten. Whereupon he would console himself by saying that such a task was "not in his line," that his brains were not of that pettifogging order which would allow of his sitting down with the patience requisite to master the secret of the figures. To-night, for the twentieth time, he brought out the MS. He again read the prefatory note carefully over, although he could almost have said it by heart, and once more his puzzled eyes ran over the complicated array of figures, till at last, with an impatient "Pish !" he flung the MS. to the other side of the table, and poured out for himself another cup of tea.

"I must send it to Bexell," he said to himself. "If anyone can make it out, he can. And yet I don't like making another man as wise as myself in such a matter. However, there is no help for it in the present case. If I keep the MS. by me till doomsday I shall never succeed in making out the meaning of those confounded figures."

When he had finished his tea he took out his writing desk and wrote as under :

"My dear Bexell,—I have only just got back from Scotland after an absence of six weeks. I have brought with me a severe catarrh, a new plaid, a case of Mountain Dew, and a MS. written in cipher. The first and second of these articles I retain for my own use. Of the third I send you half-a-dozen bottles by way of sample : a judicious imbibition of the contents will be found to be a sovereign remedy for the Pip and other kindred disorders that owe their origin to a melancholy frame of mind. The fourth article on my list I send you bodily. It has been lent to me by a friend of mine who states that he found it in his muniment chest among a lot of old

title deeds, leases, etc., the first time he waded through them after coming into possession of his property. Neither he nor any friend to whom he has shown it can make out its meaning, and I must confess to being myself one of the puzzled. My friend is very anxious to have it deciphered, as he thinks it may in some way relate to his property, or to some secret bit of family history with which it would be advisable that he should become acquainted. Anyhow, he gave it to me to bring to town, with a request that I should seek out someone clever in such things, and try to get it interpreted for him. Now I know of no one except yourself who is at all expert in such matters. You, I remember, used to take a delight that to me was inexplicable in deciphering those strange advertisements which now and again appear in the newspapers. Let me therefore ask of you to bring your old skill to bear in the present case, and if you can make me anything like a presentable translation to send back to my friend the laird, you will greatly oblige

"Your friend,
"E. Ducie."

The MS. consisted of three or four sheets of deed-paper fastened together at one corner with silk. The prefatory note was on the first sheet. This first sheet Ducie cut away with his penknife and locked up in his desk. The remaining sheets he sent to his friend Bexell, together with the note which he had written.

Three days later Mr. Bexell returned the sheets with his reply. In order properly to understand this reply it will be necessary to offer to the reader's notice a specimen of the MS. The conclusion arrived at by Mr. Bexell, and the mode by which he reached them, will then be more clearly comprehensible.

The following is a counterpart of the first few lines of the MS.:

253.12	59.25	14.5	96.14	158.49	1.29	465.1	28.53
4	1	6	10	4	12	9	1
16.36	151.18	58.7	14.29	368.1	209.18 43.11	1.31	1.1
11	3					9	8
29.6	186.9	204.11	86.19	43.16	348.14	196.29	203.5
4	5	10	6	1	5	6	2
186.9	1.31	21.10	143.18	200.6	29.40	408.9	61.5
5	9	4	8	3	12	11	4
209.11	496.1	24.24	28.59	69.39	391.10	60.13	200.1
2	6	4	1	10	11	3	3

The following is Mr. Bexell's reply to his friend Captain Ducie:

"My dear Ducie,—With this note you will receive back your confounded MS., but without a translation. I have spent a good deal of time and labour in trying to decipher it, and the conclusions at which I have arrived may be briefly laid before you.

1. Each group of three sets of figures represents a word.

2. Each group of two sets of figures—those with a line above and a line below—represents a letter only.

3. Those letters put together from the point where the double line begins to the point where it ceases, make up a word.

4. In the composition of this cryptogram *a book* has been used as the basis on which to work.

5. In every group of three sets of figures the first set represents the page of the book; the second, the number of the line on that page, probably counting from the top; the third the position in ordinary rotation of the word on that line. Thus you have the number of the page, the number of the line, and the number of the word.

6. In the case of the interlined groups of two sets of figures, the first set represents the number of the page; the second set the number of the line, probably counting from the top, of which line the required letter will prove to be the initial one.

7. The words thus spelled out by the interlined groups of double figures are, in all probability, proper names, or other uncommon words not to be found in their entirety in the book on which the cryptogram is based, and consequently requiring to be worked out letter by letter.

8. The book in question is not a dictionary, nor any other work the words of which come in alphabetical rotation. It is probably some ordinary book, which the writer of the cryptogram and the person for whom it is written have agreed upon beforehand to make use of as a key. I have no means of judging whether the book in question is an English or a foreign one, but by it alone, whatever it may be, can the cryptogram be read.

"Now, my dear Ducie, it would be wearisome for me to describe, and equally wearisome for you to read, the processes of reasoning by means of which the above deductions have been arrived at. But in order to satisfy you that my assumptions are not entirely fanciful or destitute of sober sense, I will describe to you, as briefly as may be, the process by means of which I have come to the conclusion that the book used as the basis of the cryptogram was not a dictionary or other work in which the words come in alphabetical rotation; and such a conclusion is very easy of proof.

"In a document so lengthy as the MS. of your friend the Scotch laird there must of necessity be many repetitions of what may be called 'indispensable words'—words one or more of which are used in the composition of almost every long sentence. I allude to such words as *a*, *an*, *and*, *as*, *of*, *by*, *the*, *their*, *them*, *these*, *they*, *you*, *I*, *it*, etc. The first thing to do was to analyse the MS. and classify the different groups of figures for the purpose of ascertaining the number of repetitions of any one group. My analysis showed me that these repetitions were surprisingly few. Forty groups were repeated twice, fifteen three times, and nine groups four times. Now, according to my calculation, the MS. contains one thousand two hundred and eighty-three words. Out of those one thousand two hundred and

eighty-three words there must have been more than the number of repetitions shown by my analysis, and not of one only, but of several of what I have called 'indispensable words.' Had a dictionary been made use of by the writer of the MS. all such repetitions would have been referred to one particular page, and to one particular line of that page: that is to say, in every case where a word repeated itself in the MS. the same group of numbers would in every case have been its *valeur*. As the repetitions were so few I could only conclude that some book of an ordinary kind had been made use of, and that the writer of the cryptogram had been sufficiently ingenious not to repeat his numbers very frequently in the case of 'indispensable words,' but had in the majority of cases given a fresh group of numbers at each repetition of such a word. I might, perhaps, go further and say that in the majority of cases where a group of figures is repeated such group refers to some word less frequently used than any of those specified above, and that one group was obliged to do duty on two or more occasions, simply because the writer was unable to find the word more than once in the book on which his cryptogram was based.

"Having once arrived at the conclusion that some book had been used as the basis of the cryptogram, my next supposition that each group of three sets of numbers showed the page of the book, the number of the line from the top, and the position of the required word in that line, seemed at once borne out by an analysis of the figures themselves. Thus, taking the first set of figures in each group, I found that in no case did they run to a higher number than 500, which would seem to indicate that the basis-book was limited to that number of pages. The second set of figures ran to no higher number than 60, which would seem to limit the lines on each page to that number. The third set of figures in no case yielded a higher number than 12, which numerals, according to my theory, would indicate the maximum number of words in each line. Thus you have at once (if such information is of any use to you) a sort of a key to the size of the required volume.

"I think I have now written enough, my dear Ducie, to afford you some idea of the method by means of which my conclusions have been arrived at. If you wish for further details I will supply them —but by word of mouth, an it be all the same to your honour; for this child detests letter-writing, and has taken a vow that if he reach the end of his present pen-and-ink venture in safety, he will never in time to come devote more than two pages of cream note to even the most exacting of friends: the sequitur of which is, that if you want to know more than is here set down you must give the writer a call, when you shall be talked to to your heart's content.

"Your exhausted friend,

"Geo. Bexell."

Captain Ducie had too great a respect for the knowledge of his

friend Bexell in matters like the one under review to dream for one moment of testing the validity of any of his conclusions. He accepted the whole of them as final. Having got the conclusions themselves, he cared nothing as to the processes by which they had been deduced: the details interested him not at all. Consequently he kept out of the way of his friend, being in truth considerably disgusted to find that, so far as he was himself concerned, the affair had ended in a fiasco. He could not look upon it in any other light. It was utterly out of the range of probability that he should ever succeed in ascertaining on what particular book the cryptogram was based, and no other knowledge was now of the slightest avail. He was half inclined to send back the MS. anonymously to Platzoff, as being of no further use to himself; but he was restrained by the thought that there was just a faint chance that the much-desired volume might turn up during his forthcoming visit to Bon Repos—that even at the eleventh hour the key might be found.

He was terribly chagrined to think that the act of genteel petty larceny, by which he had lowered himself more in his own eyes than he would have cared to acknowledge, had been so absolutely barren of results. That portion of his moral anatomy which he would have called his conscience pricked him shrewdly now and again, but such pricks had their origin in the fact of his knavery having been unsuccessful. Had his wrong-doing won for him such a prize as he had fondly hoped to gain by its means, Conscience would have let her rusted spear hang unheeded on the wall, and beyond giving utterance now and then to a faint whisper in the dead of night, would have troubled him not at all.

It was some time in the middle of the night, about a week after Bexell had sent him back the papers, that he awoke suddenly and completely, and there before him, as clearly as though it had been written in letters of fire on the black wall, he saw the title of the wished-for book. It was the book mentioned by Platzoff in his prefatory note: *The Confessions of Parthenio the Mystic.* The knowledge had come to him like a revelation. How stupid he must have been never to have thought of it before! That night he slept no more.

Next morning he went to one of the most famous bookdealers in the metropolis. The book inquired for by Ducie was not known to the man. But that did not say that there was no such work in existence. Through his agents at home and abroad inquiry should be made, and the result communicated to Captain Ducie. Therewith the latter was obliged to content himself. Three days later came a pressing note of invitation from Platzoff.

CHAPTER XI.

BON REPOS.

On a certain fine morning towards the end of May, Captain Ducie took train at Euston Square, and late the same afternoon was set down at Windermere. A fly conveyed himself and his portmanteau to the edge of the lake. Singling out one from the tiny fleet of pleasure boats always to be found at the Bowness landing-stage, Captain Ducie seated himself in the stern and lighted his cigar. The boatman's sinewy arms soon pulled him out into the middle of the lake, when the head of the little craft was set for Bon Repos.

The sun was dipping to the western hills. In his wake he had left a rack of torn and fiery cloud, as though he had rent his garments in wrath and cast them from him. Soft, grey mists and purple shadows were beginning to strike upward from the vales, but on the great shoulders of Fairfield, and on the scarred fronts of other giants further away, the sunshine lingered lovingly. It was like the hand of Childhood caressing the rugged brows of Age.

With that glorious panorama which crowns the head of the lake before his eyes, with the rhythmic beat of the oars and the soft pulsing of the water in his ears, with the blue smoke-rings of his cigar rising like visible aspirations through the evening air, an unwonted peace, a soft brooding quietude, began to settle down upon the Captain's world-worn spirit; and through the stillness came a faint whisper, like his mother's voice speaking from the far-off years of childhood, recalling to his memory things once known, but too long forgotten; lessons too long despised, but with a vital truth underlying them which he seemed never to have realised till now. Suddenly the boat's keel grazed the shingly strand, and there before him, half shrouded in the shadows of evening, was Bon Repos.

A genuine north-country house, strong, rugged and homely-looking, despite its Gallic cognomen. It was built of the rough grey stone of the district, and roofed with large blue slates. It stood at the head of a small lawn that sloped gently up from the lake. Immediately behind the house a precipitous hill, covered with a thick growth of underwood and young trees, swept upward to a considerable height. A narrow, winding lane, the only carriage approach to the house, wound round the base of this hill, and joined the high road a quarter of a mile away. The house was only two stories high, but was large enough to have accommodated a numerous and well-to-do family. The windows were all set in a framework of plain stone, but on the lower floor some of them had been modernised, the small, square, bluish panes having given place to polished plate glass, of which two panes only were needed for each window. But this was an innovation that had not spread far. The lawn was bordered with a tasteful

diversity of shrubs and flowers, while here and there the tender fingers of some climbing plant seemed trying to smoothe away a wrinkle in the rugged front of the old house.

Captain Ducie walked up the gravelled pathway that led from the lake to the house, the boatman with his portmanteau bringing up the rear. Before he could touch either bell or knocker, the door was noiselessly opened, and a coloured servant, in a suit of plain black, greeted him with a respectful bow.

"Captain Ducie, sir, if I am not misinformed?"

"I am Captain Ducie."

"Sir, you are expected. Your rooms are ready. Dinner will be served in half-an-hour from now. My master will meet you when you come downstairs."

The portmanteau having been brought in, and the boatman paid and dismissed, said the coloured servant: "I will show you to your rooms, if you will allow me to do so. The man appointed to wait upon you will follow with your luggage in a minute or two."

He led the way, and Ducie followed in silence.

The tired Captain gave a sigh of relief and gratitude, and flung himself into an easy-chair as the door closed behind his conductor. His two rooms were *en suite*, and while as replete with comfort as the most thorough-going Englishman need desire, had yet about them a touch of lightness and elegance that smacked of a taste that had been educated on the Continent, and was unfettered by insular prejudices.

"At Stapleton I had a loft that was hardly fit for a groom to sleep in; here I have two rooms that a cardinal might feel proud to occupy. Vive la Russie!"

M. Platzoff was waiting at the foot of the staircase when Ducie went down. A cordial greeting passed between the two, and the host at once led the way to the dining-room. Platzoff in his suit of black and white cravat, with his cadaverous face, blue-black hair and chin-tuft, and the elaborate curl on the top of his forehead, looked, at the first glance, more like a ghastly undertaker's man than the host of an English country house.

But a second glance would have shown you his embroidered linen and the flashing gems on his fingers; and you could not be long with him without being made aware that you were in the company of a thorough man of the world—of one who had travelled much and observed much; of one whose correspondents kept him au courant with all the chief topics of the day. He knew, and could tell you, the secret history of the last new opera; how much had been paid for it, what it had cost to produce, and all about the great green-room cabal against the new prima donna. He knew what amount of originality could be safely claimed for the last new drama that was taking the town by storm, and how many times the same story had been hashed up before. He had read the last French novel of any

note, and could favour you with a few personal reminiscences of its author not generally known. As regarded political knowledge—if all his statements were to be trusted—he was informed as to much that was going on behind the great drop-scene. He knew how the wires were pulled that moved the puppets who danced in public, especially those wires which were pulled in Paris, Vienna and St. Petersburg. Before Ducie had been six hours at Bon Repos he knew more about political intrigues at home and abroad than he had ever dreamt of in the whole course of his previous life.

The dining-room at Bon Repos was a long low-ceilinged apartment, panelled with black oak, and fitted up in a rich and sombre style that was yet very different from the dull, heavy formality that obtains among three-fourths of the dining-rooms in English country houses. Indeed, throughout the appointments and fittings of Bon Repos there was a touch of something Oriental grafted on to French taste, combined with a thorough knowledge and appreciation of insular comfort. From the dining-room windows a lovely stretch of the lake could be seen glimmering in the starlight, and our two friends sat this evening over their wine by the wide open sash, gazing out into the delicious night. Behind them, in the room, two or three candles were burning in silver sconces; but at the window they were sitting in that sort of half light which seems exactly suited for confidential talk. Captain Ducie took advantage of it after a time to ask his host a question which he would perhaps have scarcely cared to put by broad daylight.

"Have you heard any news of your lost manuscript?"

"None whatever," answered Platzoff. "Neither do I expect, after this lapse of time, to hear anything further concerning it. It has probably never been found, or if found, has (as you suggested at 'The Golden Griffin') fallen into the hands of someone too ignorant, or too incurious, to master the secret of the cipher."

"It has been much in my thoughts since I saw you last," said Ducie. "Was the MS. in your own writing, may I ask?"

"It was in my own writing," answered the Russian. "It was a confidential communication intended for the eye of my dearest friend, and for his eye only. It was unfinished when I lost it. I had been staying a few days at one of your English spas when I joined you in the train on the day of the accident. The MS., as far as it went, had all been written before I left home; but I took it with me in my despatch-box, together with other private papers, although I knew that I could not add a single line to it while I should be from home. I have wished a thousand times since that I had left it behind me."

"I have heard of people to whom cryptography is a favourite study," said the Captain; "people who pride themselves on their ability to master the most difficult cipher ever invented. Let us hope that your MS. has not fallen into the hands of one of these clever individuals."

Platzoff shrugged his shoulders. "Let us hope so, indeed," he

said. "But I will not believe in any such untoward event. Too long a time has elapsed since the loss for me not to have heard something respecting the MS., had it been found by anyone who knew how to make use of it. Besides, I would defy the most clever reader of cryptography to master my MS. without——Ah, Bah! where's the use of talking about it? Should not you like some tobacco? Daylight's last tint has vanished, and there is a chill air sweeping down from the hills."

As they left the window, Platzoff added: "One of the most annoying features connected with my loss arises from the fact that all my labour will have to be gone through again—and very tedious work it is. I am now engaged on a second MS., which is, as nearly as I can make it, a copy of the first one; and it is a task which must be done by myself alone. To have even one confidant would be to stultify the whole affair. Another glass of claret, and then I will introduce you to my sanctum."

The coloured man who had opened the door for Captain Ducie had been in and out of the dining-room several times. He was evidently a favourite servant. Platzoff had addressed him as Cleon, and Ducie had now a question or two to ask concerning him.

Cleon was a mulatto, tall, agile and strong. Not bad-looking by any means, but carrying with him unmistakable traces of the negro blood in his veins. His hair was that of a genuine African—crisp and black, and was one mass of short curls; but except for a certain fulness of the lips his features were of the ordinary Caucasian type. He wore no beard, but a thin, straight line of black moustache. His complexion was yellow, but a different yellow from that of his master—dusky, passionate, lava-like; suggestive of fiery depths below. His eyes, too, glowed with a smothered fire that seemed as if it might blaze out at any moment, and there was in them an expression of snake-like treachery that made Captain Ducie shudder involuntarily, as though he had seen some loathsome reptile, the first time he looked steadily into their half-veiled depths. One look into each other's eyes was sufficient for both these men.

"Monsieur Cleon and I are born enemies, and he knows it as well as I do," murmured Ducie to himself, after the first secret signal of defiance had passed between the two. "Well, I never was afraid of any man in my life, and I'm not going to begin by being afraid of a valet." With that he shrugged his shoulders, and turned his back contemptuously on the mulatto.

Cleon, in his suit of black and white tie, with his quiet, stealthy movements and unobtrusive attentions, would have been pronounced good style as a gentleman's gentleman in the grandest of Belgravian mansions. Had he suddenly come into a fortune, and gone into society where his antecedents were unknown, five-sixths of his male associates would have pronounced him "a deuced gentlemanly fellow." The remaining one-sixth might have held a somewhat different opinion.

"That coloured fellow seems to be a great favourite with you," remarked Ducie, as Cleon left the room.

"And well he may be," answered Platzoff. "On two separate occasions I owed my life to him. Once in South America, when a couple of brigands had me at their mercy and were about to try the temper of their knives on my throat. He potted them both one after the other. On the second occasion he rescued me from a tiger in the jungle, who was desirous of dining *à la Russe*. I have not made a favourite of Cleon without having my reasons for so doing."

"He seems to me a shrewd fellow, and one who understands his business."

"Cleon is not destitute of ability. When I settled at Bon Repos I made him major-domo of my small establishment, but he still retains his old position as my body-servant. I offered long ago to release him; but he will not allow any third person to come between himself and me, and I should not feel comfortable under the attentions of anyone else."

Platzoff opened the door as he ceased speaking and led the way to the smoking-room.

As you lifted the curtain and went in, it was like passing at one step from Europe to the East—from the banks of Windermere to the shores of the Bosphorus. It was a circular apartment with a low cushioned divan running completely round it, except where broken by the two doorways, curtained with hangings of dark brown. The floor was an arabesque of different-coloured tiles, covered here and there with a tiny square of bright-hued Persian carpet. The walls were panelled with stamped leather to the height of six feet from the ground; above the panelling they were painted of a delicate cream colour with here and there a maxim or apophthegm from the Koran, in the Arabic character, picked out in different colours. From the ceiling a silver lamp swung on chains of silver. In the centre of the room was a marble table on which were pipes and hookahs, cigars and tobaccos of various kinds. Smaller tables were placed here and there close to the divan for the convenience of smokers.

Platzoff having asked Ducie to excuse him for five minutes, passed through the second doorway, and left the Captain to an undisturbed survey of the room. He came back in a few minutes, but so transformed in outward appearance that Ducie scarcely knew him. He had left the room in the full evening costume of an English gentleman: he came back in the turban and flowing robes of a follower of the Prophet. But however comfortable his Eastern habit might be, M. Platzoff lacked the quiet dignity and grave repose of your genuine Turkish gentleman.

"I am going to smoke one of these hookahs; let me recommend you to try another," said Platzoff as he squatted himself cross-legged on the divan.

He touched a tiny gong, and Cleon entered.

"Select a hookah for Monsieur Ducie, and prepare it."

So Cleon, having chosen a pipe, tipped it with a new amber mouthpiece, charged the bowl with fragrant Turkish tobacco, handed the stem to Ducie, and then applied the light. The same service was next performed for his master. Then he withdrew, but only to reappear a minute or two later with coffee served up in the Oriental fashion—black and strong, without sugar or cream.

"This is one of my little smoke-nights," said Platzoff as soon as they were alone. "Last night was one of my big smoke-nights."

"You speak a language I do not understand."

"I call those occasions on which I smoke opium my big smoke-nights."

"Can it be true that you are an opium smoker?" said Ducie.

"It can be and is quite true that I am addicted to that so-called pernicious habit. To me it is one of the few good things this world has to offer. Opium is the key that unlocks the golden gates of Dreamland. To its disciples alone is revealed the true secret of subjective happiness. But we will talk more of this at some future time."

CHAPTER XII.

THE AMSTERDAM EDITION OF 1698.

CAPTAIN DUCIE soon fell into the quiet routine of life at Bon Repos. It was not distasteful to him. To a younger man it might have seemed to lack variety, to have impinged too closely on the verge of dulness; but Captain Ducie had reached that time of life when quiet pleasures please the most, and when much can be forgiven the man who sets before you a dinner worth eating. Not that Ducie had anything to forgive. Platzoff had contracted a great liking for his guest, and his hospitality was of that cordial quality which makes the object of it feel himself thoroughly at home. Besides this, the Captain knew when he was well off, and had no wish to exchange his present pleasant quarters, his rambles across the hills, and his sailings on the lake, for his dingy bed-room in town with the harassing, hunted-down life of a man upon whom a dozen writs are waiting to be served, and who can never feel certain that his next day's dinner may not be eaten behind the locks and bars of a prison.

Sometimes on horseback, sometimes on foot, sometimes accompanied by his host, sometimes alone, Ducie explored the lovely country round Bon Repos to his heart's content. Another source of pleasure and healthful exercise he found in long solitary pulls up and down the lake in a tiny skiff which had been set apart for his service. In the evening came dinner and conversation with his host, with perhaps a game or two of billiards to finish up the day.

Captain Ducie found no scope for the exercise of his gambling proclivities at Bon Repos. Platzoff never touched card or dice. He

could handle a cue tolerably well, but beyond a half-crown game, Ducie giving him ten points out of fifty, he could never be persuaded to venture. If the Captain, when he went down to Bon Repos, had any expectation of replenishing his pockets by means of faro and unlimited loo, he was wretchedly mistaken. But whatever secret annoyance he might feel, he was too much a man of the world to allow his host even to suspect its existence.

Of society in the ordinary meaning of that word there was absolutely none at Bon Repos. None of the neighbouring families by any chance ever called on Platzoff. By no chance did Platzoff ever call on any of the neighbouring families.

"They are too good for me, too orthodox, too strait-laced," exclaimed the Russian one day in his quiet, jeering way. "Or it may be that I am not good enough for them. Any way, we do not coalesce. Rather are we like flint and steel, and eliminate a spark whenever we come in contact. They look upon me as a pagan, and hold me in horror. I look upon three-fourths of them as Pharisees, and hold them in contempt. Good people there are among them no doubt; people whom it would be a pleasure to know, but I have neither time, health, nor inclination for conventional English visiting —for your ponderous style of hospitality. I am quite sure that my ideas of men and manners would not coincide with those of the quiet country ladies and gentlemen of these parts; while theirs would seem to me terribly wearisome and jejune. Therefore, as I take it, we are better apart."

By and by Ducie discovered that his host was not so entirely isolated from the world as at first sight he appeared to be.

Occasional society there was of a certain kind, intermittent, coming and going like birds of passage. One, or sometimes two visitors, of whose arrival Ducie had heard no previous mention, would now and again put in an appearance at the dinner-table, would pass one, or at the most two nights at Bon Repos, and would then be seen no more, having gone as mysteriously as they had come.

These visitors were always foreigners, now of one nationality, now of another: and were always closeted privately with Platzoff for several hours. In appearance some of them were strangely shabby and unkempt, in a wild, un-English sort of fashion, while others among them seemed like men to whom the good things of this world were no strangers. But whatever their appearance, they were all treated by Platzoff as honoured guests for whom nothing at his command was too good.

As a matter of course, they were all introduced to Captain Ducie, but none of their names had been heard by him before—indeed, he had a dim suspicion, gathered, he could not have told how, that the names by which they were made known to him were in some cases fictitious ones, and appropriated for that occasion only. But to the Captain that fact mattered nothing. They were people whom he

should never meet after leaving Bon Repos, or if he did chance to meet them, whom he should never recognise.

One other noticeable feature there was about these birds of passage. They were all men of considerable intelligence—men who could talk tersely and well on almost any topic that might chance to come uppermost at table, or during the after-dinner smoke. Literature, art, science, travel—on any or all of these subjects they had opinions to offer; but one subject there was that seemed tabooed among them as by common consent: that subject was politics. Captain Ducie saw and recognised the fact, but as he himself was a man who cared nothing for politics of any kind, and would have voted them a bore in general conversation, he was by no means disposed to resent their extrusion from the table talk at Bon Repos.

As to whom and what these strangers might be, no direct information was vouchsafed by the Russian. Captain Ducie was left in a great measure to draw his own conclusions. A certain conversation which he had one day with his host seemed to throw some light on the matter. Ducie had been asking Platzoff whether he did not sometimes regret having secluded himself so entirely from the world; whether he did not long sometimes to be in the great centres of humanity, in London or Paris, where alone life's full flavour can be tasted.

"Whenever Bon Repos becomes Mal Repos," answered Platzoff—"whenever a longing such as you speak of comes over me—and it does come sometimes—then I flee away for a few weeks, to London oftener than anywhere else—certainly not to Paris: that to me is forbidden ground. By-and-by I come back to my nest among the hills, vowing there is no place like it in the world's wide round. But even when I am here, I am not so shut out from the world and its great interests as you seem to imagine. I see History enacting itself before my eyes, and I cannot sit by with averted face. I hear the grand chant of Liberty as the beautiful goddess comes nearer and nearer and smites down one Oppressor after another with her red right hand; and I cannot shut my ears. I have been an actor in the great drama of Revolution ever since a lad of twelve. I saw my father borne off in chains to Siberia, and heard my mother with her dying breath curse the tyrant who had sent him there. Since that day Conspiracy has been the very salt of my life. For it I have fought and bled; for it I have suffered hunger, thirst, imprisonment, and dangers unnumbered. Paris, Vienna, St. Petersburg, are all places that I can never hope to see again. For me to set foot in any one of the three would be to run the risk of almost certain detection, and in my case detection would mean hopeless incarceration for the poor remainder of my days. To the world at large I may seem nothing but a simple country gentleman, living a dull life in a spot remote from all stirring interests. But I may tell you, sir (in strictest confidence, mind), that although I stand a little aside from the noise

and heat of the battle, I work for it with heart and brain as busily, and to better purpose, let us hope, than when I was a much younger man. I am still a conspirator, and a conspirator I shall remain till Death taps me on the shoulder and serves me with his last great writ of *habeas corpus*."

These words recurred to Ducie's memory a day or two later when he found at the dinner-table two foreigners whom he had never seen before.

"Is it possible that these bearded gentlemen are also conspirators?" asked the Captain of himself. "If so, their mode of life must be a very uncomfortable one. It never seems to include the use of a razor, and very sparingly that of comb and brush. I am glad that I have nothing to do with what Platzoff calls *The Great Cause*."

But Captain Ducie was not a man to trouble himself with the affairs of other people unless his own interests were in some way affected thereby. M. Paul Platzoff might have been mixed up with all the plots in Europe for anything the Captain cared: it was a mere question of taste, and he never interfered with another man's tastes when they did not clash with his own. Besides, in the present case, his attention was claimed by what to him was a matter of far more serious interest. From day to day he was anxiously waiting for news from the London bookseller who was making inquiries on his behalf as to the possibility of obtaining a copy of *The Confessions of Parthenio the Mystic*. Day passed after day till a fortnight had gone, and still there came no line from the bookseller.

Ducie's impatience could no longer be restrained: he wrote, asking for news. The third day brought a reply. The bookseller had at last heard of a copy. It was in the library of a monastery in the Low Countries. The coffers of the monastery needed replenishing; the abbot was willing to part with the book, but the price of it would be a sum equivalent to fifty guineas of English money. Such was the purport of the letter.

To Captain Ducie, just then, fifty guineas were a matter of serious moment. For a full hour he debated with himself whether or no he should order the book to be bought.

Supposing it duly purchased; supposing that it really proved to be the key by which the secret of the Russian's MS. could be mastered; might not the secret itself prove utterly worthless as far as he, Ducie, was concerned? Might it not be merely a secret bearing on one of those confounded political plots in which Platzoff was implicated—a matter of moment no doubt to the writer, but of no earthly utility to anyone not inoculated with such March-hare madness?

These were the questions that it behoved him to consider. At the end of an hour he decided that the game was worth the candle: he would risk his fifty guineas.

Taking one of Platzoff's horses, he rode without delay to the

nearest telegraph station. His message to the bookseller was as under:

"Buy the book, and send it down to me here by confidential messenger."

The next few day were days of suspense, of burning impatience. The messenger arrived almost sooner than Ducie expected, bringing the book with him. Ducie sighed as he signed the cheque for fifty guineas, with ten pounds for expenses. That shabby calf-bound worm-eaten volume seemed such a poor exchange for the precious slip of paper that had just left his fingers. But what was done could not be undone, so he locked the book away carefully in his desk and locked up his impatience with it till nightfall.

He could not get away from Platzoff till close upon midnight. When he got to his own room he bolted the door, and drew the curtains across the windows, although he knew that it was impossible for anyone to spy on him from without. Then he opened his desk, spread out the MS. before him, and took up the volume. A calf-bound volume, with red edges, and numbering five hundred pages. It was in English, and the title-page stated it to be "*The Confessions of Parthenio the Mystic: A Romance.* Translated from the Latin. With Annotations, and a Key to Sundrie Dark Meanings. Imprinted at Amsterdam in the Year of Grace 1698." It was in excellent condition.

Captain Ducie's eagerness to test his prize would not allow of more than a very cursory inspection of the general contents of the volume. So far as he could make out, it seemed to be a political satire veiled under the transparent garb of an Eastern story. Parthenio was represented as a holy man—a Spiritualist or Mystic—who had lived for many years in a cave in one of the Arabian deserts. Commanded at length by what he calls the "inner voice," he sets out on his travels to visit sundry courts and kingdoms of the East. He returns after five years, and writes, for the benefit of his disciples, an account of the chief things he has seen and learned while on his travels. The courts of England, France and Spain, under fictitious names, are the chief marks for his ponderous satire, and some of the greatest men in the three kingdoms are lashed with his most scurrilous abuse. Under any circumstances the book was not one that Captain Ducie would have cared to wade through, and in the present case, after dipping into a page here and there, and finding that it contained nothing likely to interest him, he proceeded at once to the more serious business of the evening.

The clocks of Bon Repos were striking midnight as Captain Ducie proceeded to test the value of the first group of figures on the MS., according to the formula laid down for him by his friend Bexell.

The first group of figures was $\frac{253.12}{4}$. Turning to page two hundred and fifty-three of the Confessions, and counting from the top of that page, he found that the fourth word of the twelfth line gave him *you*.

The second clump of figures was $\frac{59 \cdot 25}{1}$. The first word of the twenty-fifth line of page fifty-nine gave him *will*. The third clump of figures gave him *have*, and the fourth *gathered*. These four words, ranged in order, read: *You will have gathered*. Such a sequence of words could not arise from mere accident. When he had got thus far Ducie knew that Platzoff's secret would soon be a secret no longer, that in a very little while the heart of the mystery would be laid bare.

Encouraged by his success, Ducie went to work with renewed vigour, and before the clock struck one he had completed the first sentence of the MS., which ran as under:—

You will have gathered from the foregoing note, my dear Carlo, that I have something of importance to relate to you—something that I am desirous of keeping a secret from everyone but yourself.

As his friend Bexell surmised, Ducie found that the groups of figures distinguished from the rest by two horizontal lines, one above and one below, as thus 58.7 14.29 368.1 209.18 43.11, were the *valeurs* of some proper name or other word for which there was no equivalent in the book. Such words had to be spelt out letter by letter in the same way that complete words were picked out in other cases. Thus the marked figures as above, when taken letter by letter, made up the word *Carlo*—a name to which there was nothing similar in the Confessions.

It had been broad daylight for two hours before Captain Ducie grew tired of his task and went to bed. He went on with it next night, and every night till it was finished. It was a task that deepened in interest as he proceeded with it. It grew upon him to such a degree that when near the close he feigned illness, and kept his room for a whole day, so that he might the sooner get it done.

If Captain Ducie had ever amused himself with trying to imagine the nature of the secret which he had now succeeded in unravelling, the reality must have been very different from his expectations. One gigantic thought, whose coming made him breathless for a moment, took possession of him, as a demon might have done, almost before he had finished his task, dwarfing all other thoughts by its magnitude. It was a thought that found relief in six words only:

"It must and shall be mine!"

CHAPTER XIII.

M. PLATZOFF'S SECRET—CAPTAIN DUCIE'S TRANSLATION OF M. PAUL PLATZOFF'S MS.

"You will have gathered from the foregoing note, my dear Carlo, that I have something of importance to relate to you; something

hat I am desirous of keeping a secret from everyone but yourself. From the same source you will have learned where to find the key by which alone the lock of my secret can be opened.

"I was induced by two reasons to make use of *The Confessions of Parthenio the Mystic* as the basis of my cryptographic communication. In the first place, each of us has in his possession a copy of the same edition of that rare book, *viz.*, the Amsterdam edition of 1698. In the second place, there are not more than half-a-dozen copies of the same work in England; so that if this document were by mischance to fall into the hands of some person other than him for whom it is intended, such person, even if sufficiently acute to guess at the means by which alone the cryptogram can be read, would still find it a matter of some difficulty to obtain possession of the requisite key.

"I address these lines to you, my dear Lampini, not because you and I have been friends from youth, not because we have shared many dangers and hardship together, not because we have both kept the same great object in view throughout life; in fine, I do not address them to you as a private individual, but in your official capacity as Secretary of the Secret Society of San Marco.

"You know how deeply I have had the objects of the Society at heart ever since, twenty-five years ago, I was deemed worthy of being made one of the initiated. You know how earnestly I have striven to forward its views both in England and abroad; that through my connection with it I am *suspect* at nearly every capital on the Continent—that I could not enter some of them except at the risk of my life; that health, time, money—all have been ungrudgingly given for the furtherance of the same great end.

"Heaven knows I am not penning these lines in any self-gratulatory frame of mind—I who write from this happy haven among the hills. Self-gratulation would ill-become such as me. Where I have given gold, others have given their blood. Where I have given time and labour, others have undergone long and cruel imprisonments, have been separated from all they loved on earth, and have seen the best years of their life fade hopelessly out between the four walls of a living tomb. What are my petty sacrifices to such as these?

"But not to everyone is granted the happiness of cementing a great cause with his heart's blood. We must each work in the appointed way—some of us in the full light of day; others in obscure corners, at work that can never be seen, putting in the stones of the foundation painfully one by one, but never destined to share in the glory of building the roof of the edifice.

"Sometimes, in your letters to me, especially when those letters contained any disheartening news, I have detected a tone of despondency, a latent doubt as to whether the cause to which both of us are so firmly bound was really progressing; whether it was

not fighting against hope to continue the battle any longer; whether it would not be wiser to retreat to the few caves and fastnesses that were left us, and leaving Liberty still languishing in chains, and Tyranny still rampant in the high places of the world, to wage no longer a useless war against the irresistible Fates. Happily, with you such moods were of the rarest: you would have been more than mortal had not your soul at times sat in sackcloth and ashes.

"Such seasons of doubt and gloom have come to me also; but I know that in our secret hearts we both of us have felt that there was a self-sustaining power, a latent vitality in our cause that nothing could crush out utterly; that the more it was trampled on the more dangerous it would become, and the faster it would spread. Certain great events that have happened during the last twelve months have done more towards the propagation of the ideas we have so much at heart than in our wildest dreams we dare have hoped only three short years ago. Gravely considering these things, it seems to me that the time cannot be far distant when the contingent plan of operations as agreed upon by the Central Committee two years ago, to which I gave in my adhesion on the occasion of your last visit to Bon Repos, will have to replace the scheme at present in operation, and will become the great lever in carrying out the Society's policy in time to come.

"When the time shall be ripe, but one difficulty will stand in the way of carrying out the proposed contingent plan. That difficulty will arise from the fact that the Society's present expenses will then be trebled or quadrupled, and that a vast accession to the funds at command of the Committee for the time being will thus be imperatively necessitated. As a step, as a something towards obviating whatever difficulty may arise from lack of funds, I have devised to you, as Secretary of the Society, the whole of my personal estate, amounting in the aggregate to close upon fifteen thousand pounds. This property will not accrue to you till my decease; but that event will happen no very long time hence. My will, duly signed and witnessed, will be found in the hands of my lawyer.

"But it was not merely to advise you of this bequest that I have sought such a roundabout mode of communication. I have a greater and a much more important bequest to make to the Society, through you, its accredited agent. I have in my possession a green Diamond, the estimated value of which is a hundred and fifty thousand pounds. This precious gem I shall leave to you, by you to be sold after my death, the proceeds of the sale to be added to the other funded property of the Society of San Marco.

"The Diamond in question became mine during my travels in India many years ago. I believe my estimate of its value to be a correct one. Except my confidential servant, Cleon (whom you will remember), no one is aware that I have in my possession a stone of such immense value. I have never trusted it out of my own keep-

ing, but have always retained it by me, in a safe place, where I could lay my hands upon it at a moment's notice. But not even to Cleon have I entrusted the secret of the hiding-place, incorruptibly faithful as I believe him to be. It is a secret locked in my own bosom alone.

"You will now understand why I have resorted to cryptography in bringing these facts under your notice. It is intended that these lines shall not be read by you till after my decease. Had I adopted the ordinary mode of communicating with you, it seemed to me not impossible that some other eye than the one for which it was intended might peruse this statement before it reached you, and that through some foul play or underhand deed the Diamond might never come into your possession.

"It only remains for me now to point out where and by what means the Diamond may be found. It is hidden away in ——"

Here the MS., never completed, ended abruptly.

(To be continued.)

RONDEAU.

In vain we call to youth, "Return!"
In vain to fires, "Waste not, yet burn!"
In vain to all life's happy things,
"Give the days song—give the hours wings!
Let us lose naught—yet always learn!"

The tongue must lose youth, as it sings—
New knowledge still new sorrow brings:
Oh, sweet lost youth, for which we yearn
In vain!
But even this hour from which ye turn—
Impatient—o'er its funeral urn
Your soul with mad importunings
Will cry, "Come back, lost hour!" So rings
Ever the cry of those who yearn
In vain.

E. Nesbit.

SAPPHO.

WHEN the Akropolis at Athens bore its beautiful burden entire and perfect, one miniature temple stood dedicated to wingless Victory, in token that the city which had defied and driven back the barbarian should never know defeat.

But only a few decades had passed away when that temple stood as a mute and piteous witness that Athens had been laid low in the dust, and that Victory, though she could never weave a garland for Hellenes who had conquered Hellenes, was no longer a living power upon her chosen citadel. By the eighteenth century the shrine had altogether disappeared: the site only could be traced, and four slabs from its frieze were discovered close at hand, built into the walls of a Turkish powder magazine; but not another fragment could be found.

The descriptions of Pausanias and of one or two later travellers were all that remained to tell us of the whole; of its details we might form some faint conception from those frieze marbles, rescued by Lord Elgin and now in the British museum.

But we are not left to restore the temple of wingless Victory in our imagination merely, aided by description and by fragment. It stands to-day almost complete except for its shattered sculptures, placed upon its original site, and looking, among the ruins of the grander buildings around it, like a beautiful child who gazes for the first time on sorrow which it feels but cannot share. The blocks of marble taken from its walls and columns had been embedded in a mass of masonry, and when Greece was once more free, and all traces of Turkish occupation were being cleared from the Akropolis, these were carefully put together with the result that we have described.

Like this in part, but unhappily only in part, is the story of the poems of Sappho. She wrote, as the architect planned, for all time. We have one brief fragment, proud, but pathetic in its pride, that tells us she knew she was meant not altogether to die:

"I say that there will be remembrance of us hereafter,"

and again with lofty scorn she addresses some other woman:

"But thou shalt lie dead, nor shall there ever be remembrance of thee then or in the time to come, for thou hast no share in the roses of Pieria; but thou shalt wander unseen even in the halls of Hades, flitting forth amid the shades of the dead."

The words sound in our ears with a melancholy close as we remember how hopelessly lost is almost every one of those poems

that all Hellas loved and praised as long as the love and praise of Hellas was of any worth. Remembrance among men was, to her, the Muses' crowning gift; that which should distinguish her from ordinary mortals, even beyond the grave, and grant her new life in death. But it was only for her songs' sake that she cared to live; she looked for immortality only because she felt that they were too fair to die.

It was almost by accident that the name of Sappho was first associated with the slanders that have ever since clung round it.

By the close of the fourth century, B.C., Athenian comedy had degenerated into brilliant and witty and scandalous farce, in many essentials resembling the new Comedy of the Restoration in England. But the vitiated Athenian palate required a seasoning which did not commend itself to English taste; it was necessary that the shafts of the writer's wit should strike some real and well-known personage.

Politics, which had furnished so many subjects and so many characters to Aristophanes, were now a barren field, and public life at Athens in those days was nothing if not political. Hence arose the practice of introducing great names of bygone days into these comedies, in all kinds of ridiculous and disgraceful surroundings.

There was a piquancy about these libels on the dead which we cannot understand, but which we may contrast with the less dishonourable process known to modern historians as "whitewashing." Just as Tiberius and Henry VIII. have been rescued from the infamy of ages, and placed among us upon pedestals of honour from which it will be difficult hereafter wholly to dislodge them, many honoured names were taken by these iconoclasts of the Middle Comedy and hurled down to such infamy as they alone could bestow.

Sappho stood out prominently as the one supreme poetess of Hellas, and the poets, if so they must be called, of the decline of Greek dramatic art were never weary of loading her name with every most disgraceful reproach they could invent. It is hardly worth while to discuss a subject so often discussed with so little profit, or it would be easy to show that these gentlemen, Ameipsias, Antiphanes, Diphilus, and the rest, were indebted solely to their imagination for their facts.

It would be as fair to take the picture of Sokrates in the "Clouds" of Aristophanes for a faithful representation of the philosopher as it would be to take the Sappho of the comic stage for the true Sappho. Indeed, it would be fairer; for the Sokrates of the "Clouds" is an absurd caricature, but, like every good caricature, it bore some resemblance to the original.

Aristophanes and his audience were familiar with the figure of Sokrates as he went in and out amongst them; they knew his character and his manner of life; and, though the poet ventured to

pervert the teaching and to ridicule the habits of a well-known citizen, he would not venture to put before the people a representation in which there was not a grain of truth.

But Sappho had been dead for two hundred years: the Athenian populace knew little of her except that she had been great and that she had been unhappy; and the descendants of the men who had thronged the theatre to see the Œdipus of Sophokles, sickening with that strange disease which makes the soul crave to batten on the fruits that are its poison, found a rare feast furnished forth in the imaginary history of the one great woman of their race.

The centuries went on, and Sappho came before the tribunal of the early Christian Church.

The chief witnesses against her were these same comic poets, who were themselves prisoners at the bar; and her judges, with the ruthless impartiality of undiscriminating zeal, condemned the whole of her works, as well as those of her accusers, to be destroyed in the flames.

Thus her works have almost totally perished: the fragments that are extant give us only the faintest hints of the grace and sweetness that we have for ever lost.

The mode of the preservation of these remains is half-pathetic, half-grotesque. We have one complete poem and a considerable portion of another; the rest are the merest fragments—now two or three lines, now two or three words, often unintelligible without their context. We have imitations and translations by Catullus and by Horace; but even Catullus has conspicuously failed to reproduce her. As Mr. Swinburne has candidly and very truly said: "No man can come close to her."

No; all that we possess of Sappho is gleaned from the dictionary, the geography, the grammar and the archæological treatise; from a host of worthy authors who are valued now chiefly for these quotations which they have enshrined. Here a painful scholar of Alexandria has preserved the phrase—

"The golden sandalled dawn but now has (waked) me,"

to show how Sappho employed the adverb. Apollonius, to prove that the Æolic dialect had a particular form for the genitive case of the first personal pronoun, has treasured up two sad and significant utterances,

"But thou forgettest me!"

and

"Or else thou lovest another than me."

The Æolic genitive has saved for us another of these sorrow-laden sentences which Mr. Swinburne has amplified in some beautiful but too wordy lines. Sappho only says

"I am full weary of Gorgo.

—A few of these fragments tell us of the poet herself.

"I have a daughter like golden flowers, Kleis my beloved, for whom (I would take) not all Sydia. . . "

and one beautiful line which we can recognise in the translation by Catullus,

"Like a child after its mother, I——"

The touches by which she has painted nature are so fine and delicate that the only poet of our time who has a right to attempt to translate them has declared it to be "the one impossible task." Our English does, indeed, sound harsh and unmusical as we try to represent her words; yet what a picture is here—

"And round about the cold (stream) murmurs through the apple-orchards, and slumber is shed down from trembling leaves."

She makes us hear the wind upon the mountains falling on the oaks; she makes us feel the sun's radiance and beauty, as it glows through her verses; she makes us love with her the birds and the flowers that she loved. She has a womanly pity not only for the dying doves when—

"Their hearts grew cold and they dropped their wings,"

but for the hyacinth which the shepherds trample under foot upon the hillside. The golden pulse growing on the shore, the roses, the garlands of dill, are yet fragrant for us; we can even now catch the sweet tones of the "Spring's angel," as she calls it, the nightingale that sang in Lesbos ages and ages ago. One beautiful fragment has been woven with another into a few perfect lines by Dante Gabriel Rossetti; but it shall be given here as it stands. It describes a young unwedded maiden:

"As the sweet apple blushes on the end of the bough, the very end of the bough which the gatherers overlooked—nay, overlooked not, but could not reach."

The Ode to Aphrodite and the fragment to Anaktoria are too often found in translations to be quoted here. Indeed, it is of but little use to quote; for Sappho can be known only in her own language and by those who will devote time to these inestimable fragments. Their beauty grows upon us as we read; we catch in one the echo of a single tone, so sweet that it needs no harmony and again a few stray chords that haunt the ear and fill us with an exquisite dissatisfaction; and yet again a grave and stately measure such as her rebuke to Alkæus—

"Had thy desire been for what was good or noble and had not thy tongue framed some evil speech, shame had not filled thine eyes ——"

MARY GREY.

THE SILENT CHIMES.

RINGING AT MIDDAY.

IT was an animated scene; and one you only find in England. The stubble of the cornfields looked pale and bleak in the departing autumn, the wind was shaking down the withered leaves from the trees, whose thinning branches told unmistakably of the rapidly-advancing winter. But the day was bright after the night's frost, and the sun shone on the glowing scarlet coats of the hunting men, and the hounds barked in every variety of note and leaped with delight in the morning air. It was the first run of the season, and the sportsmen were fast gathering at the appointed spot—a field flanked by a grove of trees called Poachers' Copse.

Ten o'clock, the hour fixed for the throw-off, came and went, and still Poachers' Copse was not relieved of its busy intruders. Many a gentleman foxhunter glanced at his hunting-watch as the minutes passed, many a burly farmer jerked his horse impatiently; while the grey-headed huntsman cracked his long whip amongst his canine favourites and promised them they should soon be on the scent. The delay was caused by the non-arrival of the Master of the Hounds.

But now all eyes were directed to a certain quarter, and by the brightened looks and renewed stir, it might be thought that he was appearing. A stranger, sitting his horse well and quietly at the edge of Poachers' Copse, watched the newcomers as they came into view. Foremost of them rode an elderly gentleman in scarlet, and by his side a young lady who might be a few years past twenty.

"Father and daughter, I'll vow," commented the stranger, noting that both had the same well-carved features, the same defiant, haughty expression, the same proud bearing. "What a grandly-handsome girl! And he, I suppose, is the man we are waiting for. Is that the Master of the Hounds?" he asked aloud of the horseman next him, who chanced to be young Mr. Threpp.

"No, sir, that is Captain Monk," was the answer. "They are saying yonder that he has brought word the Master is taken ill and cannot hunt to-day"—which proved to be correct. The Master had been taken with giddiness when about to mount his horse.

The stranger rode up to Captain Monk; judging him to be regarded—by the way he was welcomed and the respect paid him—as the chief personage at the meet, representing in a manner the Master. Lifting his hat, he begged grace for having, being a

stranger, come out, uninvited, to join the field; adding that his name was Hamlyn and he was staying with Mr. Peveril at Peacock's Range.

Captain Monk wheeled round at the address; his head had been turned away. He saw a tall, dark man of about five-and-thirty years, so dark and sunburnt as to suggest ideas of his having recently come from a warmer climate. His hair was black, his eyes were dark brown, his features and manner prepossessing, and he spoke as a man accustomed to good society.

Captain Monk, lifting his hat in return, met him with cordiality. The field was open to all, he said, but any friend of Peveril's would be doubly welcome. Peveril himself was a muff, in so far as that he never hunted.

"Hearing there was to be a meet to-day, I could not resist the temptation of joining it; it is many years since I had the opportunity," remarked the stranger.

There was not time for more, the hounds were throwing off. Away dashed the Captain's steed, away dashed the stranger's, away dashed Miss Monk's, the three keeping side by side.

Presently came a fence. Captain Monk leaped it and galloped onwards after the other red-coats. Miss Eliza Monk would have leaped it next, but her horse refused it; yet he was an old hunter and she a fearless rider. The stranger was waiting to follow her. A touch of the angry Monk temper assailed her and she forced her horse to the leap. He had a temper also; he did not clear it, and horse and rider came down together.

In a trice Mr. Hamlyn was off his own steed and raising her. She was not hurt, she said, when she could speak; a little shaken, a little giddy—and she leaned against the fence. The refractory horse, unnoticed for the moment, got upon his legs, took the fence of his own accord and tore away after the field. Young Mr. Threpp, who had been in some difficulty with his own steed, rode up now.

"Shall I ride back to the Hall and get the pony-carriage for you, Miss Eliza?" asked the young man.

"Oh, dear, no," she replied, "thank you all the same. I would prefer to walk home."

"Are you equal to the walk?" interposed the stranger.

"Quite. The walk will do away with this faintness. It is not the first fall I have had."

The stranger whispered to young Mr. Threpp—who was as good-natured a young fellow as ever lived. Would he consent to forego the sport that day and lead his horse to Mr. Peveril's? If so, he would accompany the young lady and give her the support of his arm.

So William Threpp rode off, leading Mr. Hamlyn's horse, and Miss Monk accepted the stranger's arm. He told her a little about himself as they walked along. It might not have been an ominous commencement, but intimacies have grown sometimes out of a

slighter introduction. Their nearest way led past the Vicarage. Mr. Grame saw them from its windows and came running out.

"Has any accident taken place?" he asked hurriedly. "I hope not."

Eliza Monk's face flushed. He had been Lucy's husband several months now, but she could not yet suddenly meet him without a thrill of emotion. Lucy ran out next; the pretty young wife for whom she had been despised. Eliza answered Mr. Grame curtly, nodded to Lucy, and passed on.

"And, as I was telling you," continued Mr. Hamlyn, "when this property was left to me in England, I made it a plea for throwing up my post in India, and came home. I landed about six weeks ago, and have been since busy in London with lawyers. Peveril, whom I knew in the days gone by, wrote to invite me to come to him here on a week's visit, before he and his wife leave for the South of France."

"They are going to winter there for Mrs. Peveril's health," observed Eliza. "Peacock's Range, the place they live at, belongs to my cousin, Harry Carradyne. Did I understand you to say that you were not an Englishman?"

"I was born in the West Indies. My family were English and had settled there."

"What a coincidence!" exclaimed Eliza Monk with a smile. "My mother was a West Indian, and I was born there.—There's my home, Leet Hall!"

"A fine old place," cried Mr. Hamlyn, regarding the mansion before him.

"You may well say 'old,'" remarked the young lady. "It has been the abode of the Monk family from generation to generation. For my part, I sometimes half wish it would fall down that we might get away to a more lively locality. Church Leet is a dead-alive place at best."

"We always want what we have not," laughed Mr. Hamlyn. "I would give all I am worth to possess an ancestral home, no matter if it were grim and gloomy. We who can boast of only modern wealth look upon these family castles with an envy you have little idea of."

"If you possess modern wealth, you possess a very good and substantial thing," she answered, echoing his laugh.—"Here comes my aunt, full of wonder."

Full of alarm also. Mrs. Carradyne stood on the terrace steps, asking if there had been an accident.

"Not much of one, Aunt Emma. Saladin refused the fence at Ring Gap, and we both came down together. This gentleman was so obliging as to forego his day's sport and escort me home. Mr.—Mr. Hamlyn, I believe?" she added. "My aunt, Mrs. Carradyne."

The stranger confirmed it. "Philip Hamlyn," he said to Mrs. Carradyne, lifting his hat.

Gaining the hall-door with slow and gentle steps came a young man, whose beautiful features were wasting more perceptibly day by day, and their hectic growing of a deeper crimson. "What is amiss, Eliza?" he cried. "Have you come to grief? Where's Saladin?"

"My brother," she said to Mr. Hamlyn.

Yes, it was indeed Hubert Monk. For he did not die of that run to the church the past New Year's Eve. The death-like faint proved to be a faint, nothing more. Nothing more *then*. But something else was advancing with gradual steps: steps that seemed to be growing almost perceptible now.

Now and again Hubert fainted in the same manner; his face taking a death-like hue, the blue tinge surrounding his mouth. Captain Monk, unable longer to shut his eyes to what might be impending, called in the best medical advice that Worcestershire could afford; and the doctors told him the truth—that Hubert's days were numbered.

To say that Captain Monk began at once to "set his house in order" would not be quite the right expression, since it was not he himself who was going to die. But he set his affairs straight as to the future, and appointed another heir in his son's place—his nephew, Harry Carradyne.

Harry Carradyne, a brave young lieutenant, was then with his regiment in some almost inaccessible fastness of the Indian Empire. Captain Monk (not concealing his lamentation and the cruel grief it was to himself personally) wrote word to him of the fiat concerning poor Hubert, together with a peremptory order to sell out and return home as the future heir. This was being accomplished, and Harry might now be expected almost any day.

But it may as well be mentioned that Captain Monk, never given to be confidential about himself or his affairs, told no one what he had done, with one exception. Even Mrs. Carradyne was ignorant of the change in her son's prospects and of his expected return. The one exception was Hubert. Soon to lose him, Captain Monk made more of his son than he had ever done, and seemed to like to talk with him.

"Harry will make a better master to succeed you than I should have made, father," said Hubert, as they were slowly pacing home from the parsonage, arm-in-arm, one dull November day, some little time after the meet of the hounds, as recorded. It was surprising how often Captain Monk would now encounter his son abroad, as if by accident, and give him his arm home.

"What d'ye mean?" wrathfully responded the Captain, who never liked to hear his own children disparaged, by themselves or by anyone else.

Hubert laughed a little. "Harry will look after things better than I ever should. I was always given to laziness. Don't you remember,

father, when a little boy in the West Indies, you used to tell me I was good for nothing but to bask in the heat?"

"I remember one thing, Hubert; and, strange to say, have remembered it only lately. Things lie dormant in the memory for years, and then crop up again. Upon getting home from one of my long voyages, your mother greeted me with the news that your heart was weak; the doctor had told her so. I gave the fellow a trimming for putting so ridiculous a notion into her head—and it passed clean out of mine. I suppose he was right, though."

"Little doubt of that, father. I wonder I have lived so long."

"Nonsense!" exploded the Captain; "you may live on yet for years. I don't know that I did not act foolishly in sending post-haste for Harry Carradyne."

Hubert smiled a sad smile. "You have done quite right, father; right in all ways; be sure of that. Harry is one of the truest and best fellows that ever lived: he will be a comfort to you when I am gone, and the best of all successors later. Just—a—moment—father!"

"Why, what's the matter?" cried Captain Monk—for his son had suddenly halted and stood with a rapidly-paling face and shortened breath, pressing his hands to his side. "Here, lean on me, lad; lean on me."

It was a sudden faintness. Nothing very much, and it passed off in a minute or two. Hubert made a brave attempt at smiling, and resumed his way. But Captain Monk did not like it at all; he knew all these things were but the beginning of the end. And that end, though not with actual irreverence, he was resenting bitterly in his heart.

"Who's that coming out?" he asked, crossly, alluding to some figure descending the steps of his house—for his sight was not what it used to be.

"It is Mr. Hamlyn," said Hubert.

"Oh—Hamlyn! He seems to be always coming in. I don't like that man somehow, Hubert. Wonder what he's lagging in the neighbourhood for?"

Hubert Monk had an idea that he could have told. But he did not want to draw down an explosion on his own head. Mr. Hamlyn came to meet them with friendly smiles and hand-shakes. Hubert liked him; liked him very much.

Not only had Mr. Hamlyn prolonged his stay beyond the "day or two" he had originally come for, but he evinced no intention of leaving. When Mr. Peveril and his wife departed for the south, he made a proposal to remain at Peacock's Range for a time as their tenant. And when the astonished couple asked his reasons, he answered that he should like to get a few runs with the hounds.

II.

THE November days glided by. The end of the month was approaching, and still Philip Hamlyn stayed on, and was a very frequent visitor at Leet Hall. Little doubt that Miss Monk was his attraction, and the parish began to say so without reticence.

The parish was right. One fine, frosty morning Mr. Hamlyn sought an interview with Captain Monk and laid before him his proposals for Eliza.

One might have thought by the tempestuous words showered down upon him in answer that he had proposed to smother her. Reproaches, hot and fast, were poured forth upon the suitor's unlucky head.

"Why, you are a stranger!" stormed the Captain; "you have not known her a month! How dare you? It's not commonly decent."

Mr. Hamlyn quietly answered that he had known her long enough to love her, and went on to say that he came of a good family, had plenty of money, and could make a liberal settlement upon her.

"That you never will," said Captain Monk. "I should not like you for my son-in-law," he continued candidly, calming down from his burst of passion to the bounds of reason. "But there can be no question of it in any way. Eliza is to become Lady Rivers."

Mr. Hamlyn opened his eyes in astonishment. "Lady Rivers!" he echoed. "Do you speak of Sir Thomas Rivers?—that old man!"

"No, I do not, sir. Sir Thomas Rivers has one foot in the grave. I speak of his eldest son. He wants her, and he shall have her."

"Pardon me, Captain, I—I do not think Miss Monk can know anything of this. I am sure she did not last night. I come to you with her full consent and approbation."

"I care nothing about that. My daughter is aware that any attempt to oppose her will to mine would be utterly futile. Young Tom Rivers has written to me to ask for her; I have accepted him, and I choose that she shall accept him. She'll like it herself, too; it will be a good match."

"Young Tom Rivers is next door to a simpleton: he is not half-baked," retorted Mr. Hamlyn, his own temper getting up: "if I may judge by what I've seen of him in the field."

"Tom Rivers is a favourite everywhere, let me tell you, sir. Eliza would not refuse him for you."

"Perhaps, Captain Monk, you will converse with her upon this point?"

"I intend to give her my orders—if that's what you mean," returned the Captain. "And now, sir, I think our discussion may terminate."

Mr. Hamlyn saw no use in prolonging it for the present. Captain Monk bowed him out of the house and called his daughter into the room.

"Eliza," he began, scorning to beat about the bush, "I have received an offer of marriage for you."

Miss Eliza blushed a little, not much: few things could make her do that now. Once our blushes have been wasted, as hers were on Robert Grame, their vivid freshness has faded for ever and aye. "The song has left the bird."

"And I have accepted it," continued Captain Monk. "He would like the wedding to be early in the year, so you may get your rattle-traps in order for it. Tell your aunt I will give her a blank cheque for the cost, and she may fill it in."

"Thank you, papa."

"There's the letter; you can read it"—pushing one across the table to her. "It came by special messenger last night, and I have sent my answer this morning."

Eliza Monk glanced at the contents, which were written on rose-coloured paper. For a moment she looked puzzled.

"Why, papa, this is from Tom Rivers! You cannot suppose I would marry *him!* A silly boy, younger than I am! Tom Rivers is the greatest goose I know."

"How dare you say so, Eliza?"

"Well, he is. Look at his note! Pink paper and a fancy edge!"

"Stuff! Rivers is young and inexperienced, but he'll grow older—he is a very nice young fellow, and a capital fox-hunter. You'd be master and mistress too—and that would suit your book, I take it. I want to have you settled near me, see, Eliza—you are all I have left, or soon will be."

"But, papa ——"

Captain Monk raised his hand for silence.

"You sent that man Hamlyn to me with a proposal for you. Eliza; you *know* that would not do. Hamlyn's property lies in the West Indies, his home too, for all I know. He attempted to tell me that he would not take you out there against my consent; but I know better, and what such ante-nuptial promises are worth. It might end in your living there."

"No, no."

"What do you say 'no, no' for, like a parrot? Circumstances might compel you. I do not like the man, besides."

"But why, papa?"

"I don't know; I have never liked him from the first. There! that's enough. You must be my Lady Rivers. Poor old Tom is on his last legs."

"Papa, I never will."

"Listen, Eliza. I had one trouble with Katherine; I will not have another with you. She defied me; she left my home rebelliously to enter upon one of her own setting-up: what came of it? Did luck attend her? Do you be more wise."

"Father," she said, moving a step forward with head uplifted; and

the resolute, haughty look which rendered their faces so much alike was very conspicuous on hers, "do not let us oppose each other. Perhaps we can each give way a little? I have promised to be the wife of Philip Hamlyn, and that promise I will fulfil. You wish me to live near you: well, he can take a place in this neighbourhood and settle down in it; and on my part, I will promise you not to leave this country. He may have to go from time to time to the West Indies; I will remain at home."

Captain Monk looked steadily at her before he answered. He marked the stern, uncompromising expression, the strong will in the dark eyes and in every feature, which no power, not even his, might unbend. He thought of his elder daughter, now lying in her grave; he thought of his son, so soon to be lying beside her; he did not care to be bereft of *all* his children, and for once in his hard life he attempted to conciliate.

"Hark to me, Eliza. Give up Hamlyn—I have said I don't like the man; give up Tom Rivers also, an' you will. Remain at home with me until a better suitor shall present himself, and Leet Hall and its broad lands shall be yours."

She looked up in surprise. Leet Hall had always hitherto gone in the male line; and, failing Hubert, it would be, or ought to be, Harry Carradyne's. Though she knew not that any steps had already been taken in that direction.

"Leet Hall?" she exclaimed.

"Leet Hall and its broad lands," repeated the Captain impatiently. "Give up Mr. Hamlyn and it shall all be yours."

She remained for some moments in deep thought, her head bent, revolving the offer. She was fond of pomp and power, as her father had ever been, and the temptation to rule as sole domineering mistress in her girlhood's home was great. But at that very instant the tall fine form of Philip Hamlyn passed across a pathway in the distance, and she turned from the temptation for ever. What little capability of loving had been left to her after the advent of Robert Grame was given to Mr. Hamlyn.

"I cannot give him up," she said in low tones.

"What moonshine, Eliza! You are not a love-sick girl now."

The colour dyed her face painfully. Did her father suspect aught of the past; of where her love *had* been given—and rejected? The suspicion only added fuel to the fire.

"I cannot give up Mr. Hamlyn," she reiterated.

"Then you will never inherit Leet Hall. No, nor aught else of mine."

"As you please, sir, about that."

"You set me at defiance, then!"

"I don't wish to do so, father; but I shall marry Mr. Hamlyn."

"At defiance," repeated the Captain, as she moved to escape from his presence; "Katherine secretly, you openly. Better that I had

never had children. Look here, Eliza: let this matter remain in abeyance for six or twelve months, things resting as they are. By that time you may have come to your senses; or I (yes, I see you are ready to retort it) to mine. If not—well, we shall only then be where we are."

"And that we should be," returned Eliza, doggedly. "Time will never change either of us."

"But events may. Let it be so, child. Stay where you are for the present, in your maiden home."

She shook her head in denial; not a line of her proud face giving way, nor a curve of her decisive lips: and Captain Monk knew that he had pleaded in vain. She would neither give up her marriage nor prolong the period of its celebration.

What could be the secret of her obstinacy? Chiefly the impossibility of tolerating opposition to her own indomitable will. It was her father's will over again; his might be a very little softening with years and trouble; not much. Had she been in desperate love with Hamlyn one could have understood it, but she was not; at most it was but a passing fancy. What says the poet? I daresay you all know the lines, and I know I have quoted them times and again, they are so true:

> "Few hearts have never loved, but fewer still
> Have felt a second passion. *None* a third.
> The first was living fire; the next a thrill;
> The weary heart can never more be stirred:
> Rely on it the song has left the bird."

Very, very true. Her passion for Robert Grame had been as living fire in its wild intensity; it was but the shadow of a thrill that warmed her heart for Philip Hamlyn. Possibly she mistook it in a degree; thought more of it than it was. The feeling of gratification which arises from flattered vanity deceives a woman's heart sometimes: and Mr. Hamlyn did not conceal his rapturous admiration of her.

She held to her defiant course, and her father held to his. He did not continue to say she should not marry; he had no power for that—and perhaps he did not want her to make a moonlight escapade of it, as Katherine had made. So the preparation for the wedding went on, Eliza herself paying for the rattletraps, as they had been called; Captain Monk avowed that he "washed his hands of it," and then held his peace.

Whether Mr. Hamlyn and his intended bride considered it best to get the wedding over and done with, lest adverse fate, set afoot by the Captain, should, after all, circumvent them, it is impossible to say, but the day fixed was a speedy one. And if Captain Monk had deemed it "not decent" in Mr. Hamlyn to propose for a young lady after only a month's knowledge, what did he think of this? They were to be married on the last day of the year.

Was it fixed upon in defiant mockery?—for, as the reader knows, it had proved an ominous day more than once in the Monk family. But no, defiance had no hand in that, simply adverse fate. The day originally fixed by the happy couple was Christmas Eve: but Mr. Hamlyn, who had to go to London about that time on business connected with his property, found it impossible to get back for the day, or for some days after it. He wrote to Eliza, asking that the day should be put off for a week, if it made no essential difference, and fixed the last day in the year. Eliza wrote word back that she would prefer that day; it gave more time for preparation.

They were to be married in her own church, and by its Vicar. Great marvel existed at the Captain's permitting this, but he said nothing. Having washed his hands of the affair, he washed them for good: had the bride been one of the laundry-maids in his household he could not have taken less notice. A Miss Wilson was coming from a little distance to be bridesmaid; and the bride and bridegroom would go off from the church door. The question of a breakfast was never mooted: Captain Monk's equable indifference might not have stood that.

"I shall wish them good-luck with all my heart—but I don't feel altogether sure they'll have it!" bewailed poor Mrs. Carradyne in private. "Eliza should have agreed to the delay proposed by her father."

III.

Ring, ring, ring, broke forth the chimes on the frosty midday air. Not midnight, you perceive, but midday, for the church clock had just given forth its twelve strokes. Another round of the dial, and the old year would have departed into the womb of the past.

Bowling along the smooth turnpike road which skirted the churchyard on one side came a gig containing a gentleman; a tall, slender, frank-looking young man, with a fair face and the pleasantest blue eyes ever seen. He wore a white top-coat, the fashion then, and was driving rapidly in the direction of Leet Hall; but when the chimes burst forth he pulled up abruptly.

"Why, what in the world?——" he began—and then sat still listening to the sweet strains of "The Bay of Biscay." The day, though in mid-winter, was bright and beautiful, and the golden sunlight, shining from the dark-blue sky, played on the young man's golden hair.

"Have they mistaken midday for midnight?" he continued, as the chimes played out their tune and died away on the air. "What's the meaning of it?"

He, Harry Carradyne, was not the only one to ask this. No human being in and about Church Leet, save Captain Monk and they who executed his orders, knew that he had decreed that the

chimes should play that day at midday. Why did he do it? What could his motive be? Surely not that they should, by playing (according to Mrs. Carradyne's theory), inaugurate ill-luck for Eliza! At the moment they began to play she was coming out of church on Mr. Hamlyn's arm, having left her maiden name behind her.

A few paces more, for he was driving gently on now, and Harry pulled up again, in surprise, as before, for the front of the church was now in view. Lots of spectators, gentle and simple, stood about, and a handsome chariot, with four post horses and a great coat-of-arms emblazoned on its panels, waited at the church gate.

"It must be a wedding!" decided Harry.

The next moment the chariot was in motion; was soon about to pass him, the bride and bridegroom inside it. A very dark but good-looking man, with an air of command in his face, he, but a stranger to Harry; she, Eliza. She wore a grey silk dress, a white bonnet, with orange blossoms and a veil, which was quite the fashionable wedding attire of the day. Her head was turned, nodding its farewells yet to the crowd, and she did not see her cousin as the chariot swept by.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed, mentally. "I wonder who she has married?"

Staying quietly where he was until the spectators should have dispersed, whose way led them mostly in opposite directions, Harry next saw the clerk come out of the church by the small vestry door, lock it and cross over to the stile; which brought him out close to the gig.

"Why, my heart alive!" he exclaimed. "Is it Captain Carradyne?"

"That's near enough," said Harry, who knew the title was accorded him by the rustic natives of Church Leet, as he bent down with his sunny smile to shake the old clerk's hand. "You are hearty as ever, I see, John. And so you have had a wedding here?"

"Ay, sir, there have been one in the church. I was not in my place, though. The Captain, he ordered me to let the church go for once, and to be ready up aloft in the belfry to set the chimes going at midday. As chance had it, the party came out just at the same time; Miss Eliza was a bit late in coming, ye see; so it may be said the chimes rang 'em out. I guess the sound astonished the people above a bit, for nobody knew they were going to play."

"But how was it all, Cale? Why should the Captain order them to chime at midday?"

John Cale shook his head. "I can't tell ye that rightly, Mr. Harry; the Captain, as ye know, sir, never says why he does this or why he does t'other. Young William Threpp, who had to be up there with me, thought he must have ordered 'em to play in mockery —for he hates the marriage like poison."

"Who is the bridegroom?"

"It's a Mr. Hamlyn, sir. A gentleman who is pretty nigh as haughty as the Captain himself; but a pleasant-spoken, kindly man, as far as I've seen: and a rich one, too."

"Why did Captain Monk object to him?"

"It's thought 'twas because he was a stranger to the place and has lived over in the Indies; and he wanted Miss Eliza, so it's said, to have young Tom Rivers. That's about it, I b'lieve, Mr. Harry."

Harry Carradyne drove away thoughtfully. At the foot of the slight ascent leading to Leet Hall, one of the grooms happened to be standing. Harry handed over to him the horse and gig, and went forward on foot.

"Bertie!" he called out. For he had seen Hubert before him, walking at a snail's pace: the very slightest hill tried him now. The only one left of the wedding-party, for the bridesmaid drove off from the church door. Hubert turned at the call.

"Harry! Why, Harry!"

Hand locked in hand, they sat down on a bench beside the path; face gazing into face. There had always been a likeness between them: in the bright-coloured, waving hair, the blue eyes and the well-favoured features. But Harry's face was redolent of youth and health; in the other's might be read approaching death.

"You are very thin, Bertie; thinner even than I expected to see you," broke from the traveller involuntarily.

"*You* are looking well, at any rate," was Hubert's answer. "And I am so glad you are come: I thought you might have been here a month ago."

"The voyage was unreasonably long; we had contrary winds almost from port to port. I got on to Worcester yesterday, slept there, and hired a horse and gig to bring me over this morning. What about Eliza's wedding, Hubert? I was just in time to see her drive away. Cale, with whom I had a word down yonder, says the master does not like it."

"He does not like it and would not countenance it: washed his hands of it (as he told us) altogether."

"Any good reason for that?"

"Not particularly good, that I see. Somehow he disliked Hamlyn; and Tom Rivers wanted Eliza, which would have pleased him greatly. But Eliza was not without blame. My father gave way so far as to ask her to delay things for a few months, not to marry in a hurry, and she would not. She might have conceded as much as that."

"Did you ever know Eliza concede anything, Bertie?"

"Well, not often."

"Who gave her away?"

"I did: look at my gala toggery"—opening his overcoat. "He wanted to forbid it. 'Don't hinder me, father,' I pleaded; 'it is the

last brotherly service I can ever render her.' And so," his tone changing to lightness, "I have been and gone and done it."

Harry Carradyne understood. "Not the last, Hubert; don't say that. I hope you will live to render her many another yet."

Hubert smiled faintly. "Look at me," he said in answer.

"Yes, I know; I see how you look. But you may take a turn yet."

"Ah, miracles are no longer wrought for us. Shall I surprise you very much, cousin mine, if I say that were the offer made me of prolonged life, I am not sure that I should accept it?"

"Not unless health were renewed with it; I can understand that. You have had to endure suffering, Bertie."

"Ay. Pain, discomfort, fears, weariness. After working out their torment upon me, they—why then they took a turn and opened out the vista of a refuge."

"A refuge?"

"The one sure Refuge offered by God to the sick and sorrowful, the weary and heavy-laden—Himself. I found it. I found *Him*, and all His wonderful mercy. It will not be long now, Harry, before I see Him face to face. And here comes His true minister, but for whom I might have missed the way."

Harry turned his head, and saw, advancing up the drive, a good-looking young clergyman. "Who is it?" he involuntarily cried.

"Your brother-in-law, Robert Grame. Lucy's husband."

It was not the fashion in those days for a bride's mother (or one acting as her mother) to attend the bride to church; therefore Mrs. Carradyne, following it, was spared risk of conflict with Captain Monk on that score. She was in Eliza's room, assisting at the putting on of the bridal robes (for we have to go back an hour or so) when a servant came up to say that Mr. Hamlyn waited below Rather wondering—for he was to have driven straight to the church—Mrs. Carradyne went downstairs.

"Pardon me, dear Mrs. Carradyne," he said, as he shook hands, and she had never seen him look so handsome, "I could not pass the house without making one more effort to disarm Captain Monk's prejudices, and asking for his blessing on us. Do you think he will consent to see me?"

Mrs. Carradyne felt sure he would not, and said so. But she sent Rimmer to the library to ask the question. Mr. Hamlyn pencilled down a few anxious words on paper, folded it, and put it into the man's hand.

No; it proved useless. Captain Monk was harder than adamant; he sent Rimmer back with a flea in his ear, and the petition torn in two.

"I feared so," sighed Mrs. Carradyne. "He will not this morning see even Eliza."

Mr. Hamlyn did not sigh in return; he spoke a cross, impatient word: he had never been able to see reason in the Captain's dislike to him, and, with a brief good-morning, went out to his carriage. But, remembering something when crossing the hall, he came back.

"Forgive me, Mrs. Carradyne; I quite forgot that I have a note for you. It is from Mrs. Peveril, I believe; it came to me this morning, enclosed in a letter of her husband's."

"You have heard at last, then!"

"At last—as you observe. Though Peveril had nothing particular to write about; I daresay he does not care for letter writing."

Slipping the note into her pocket, to be opened at leisure, Mrs. Carradyne returned to the adorning of Eliza. Somehow, it was rather a prolonged business—which made it late when the bride with her bridesmaid and Hubert drove from the door.

Mrs. Carradyne remained in the room—to which Eliza was not to return—putting this up, and that. The time slipped on, and it was close upon twelve o'clock when she got back to the drawing-room. Captain Monk was in it then, standing at the window; which he had thrown wide open. To see more clearly the bridal party come out of the church, was the thought that crossed Mrs. Carradyne's mind in her simplicity.

"I very much feared they would be late," she observed, sitting down near her brother: and at that moment the church clock began to strike twelve.

"A good thing if they were *too* late!" he answered. "Listen."

She supposed he wanted to count the strokes—what else could he be listening to? And now, by the stir at the distant gates, she saw that the bridal party had come out.

"Good heavens, what's that?" shrieked Mrs. Carradyne, starting from her chair.

"The chimes," stoically replied the Captain. And he proceeded to hum through the tune of "The Bay of Biscay," and beat a noiseless accompaniment with his foot.

"*The Chimes*, Emma," he repeated, when the melody had finished itself out. "I ordered them to be played. It's the last day of the old year, you know."

Laughing slightly at her consternation, Captain Monk closed the window and quitted the room. As Mrs. Carradyne took her handkerchief from her pocket to pass it over her face, grown white with startled terror, the note she had put there came out also, and fell on the carpet.

Picking it up, she stood at the window, gazing forth. Her sight was not what it used to be; but she discerned the bride and bridegroom enter their carriage and drive away; next she saw the bridesmaid get into the carriage from the Hall, assisted by Hubert, and that drive off in its turn. She saw the crowd disperse, this way and that; she even saw the gig there, its occupant talking with

John Cale. But she did not look at him particularly; and she had not the slightest idea but that Harry was in India.

And all that time an undercurrent of depression was running riot in her heart. None knew with what a strange terror she had grown to dread the chimes.

She sat down now and opened Mrs. Peveril's note. It treated chiefly of the utterly astounding ways that untravelled old lady was meeting with in foreign parts. "If you will believe me," wrote she, "the girl that waits on us wears carpet slippers down at heel, and a short cotton jacket for best, and she puts the tea-tray before me with the handle of the teapot turned to me and the spout standing outwards, and she comes right into the bed-room of a morning with Charles's shaving-water without knocking." But the one sentence that arrested Mrs. Carradyne's attention above any other was the following: "I reckon that by this time you have grown well acquainted with our esteemed young friend. He is a good, kindly gentleman, and I'm sure never could have done anything to deserve his wife's treatment of him."

"Can she mean Mr. Hamlyn?" debated Mrs. Carradyne, all sorts of ideas leaping into her mind with a rush. "If not— what other 'esteemed friend' can she allude to?—*she*, old herself, would call *him* young. But Mr. Hamlyn has not any wife. At least, had not until to-day."

She read the note over again. She sat with it open, buried in a reverie, thinking no end of things, good and bad: and the conclusion she at last came to was, that, with the unwonted exercise of letter-writing, poor old Mrs. Peveril's head had grown confused.

"Well, Hubert, did it all go off well?" she questioned, as her nephew entered the room, some sort of excitement on his wasted face. "I saw them drive away."

"Yes, it went off well; there was no hitch anywhere," replied Hubert. "But, Aunt Emma, I have brought a friend home with me. Guess who it is."

"Some lady or other who came to see the wedding," she returned. "I can't guess."

"You never would, though I were to give you ten guesses; no, though je vous donne en mille, as the French have it. What should you say to a young man come all the way over seas from India? There, that's as good as telling you, Aunt Emma. Guess now."

"Oh, Hubert!" clasping her trembling hands. "It cannot be Harry! What is wrong?"

Harry brought his bright face into the room and was clasped in his mother's arms. She could not understand it one bit, and fears assailed her. Come home in *this* unexpected manner! Had he left the army? What had he done? *What* had he done? Hubert laughed and told her then.

"He has done nothing wrong; everything that's good. He has

sold out at my father's request and left with honours—and is come home, the heir of Leet Hall. I said all along it was a shame to keep you out of the plot, Aunt Emma."

Well, it was glorious news for her. But, as if to tarnish its delight, like an envious sprite of evil, deep down in her mind lay that other news, just read—the ambiguous remark of old Mrs. Peveril's.

IV.

THE walk on the old pier was pleasant enough in the morning sun. Though yet but the first month in the year, the days were bright, the blue skies without a cloud. Mr. and Mrs. Hamlyn had enjoyed the fine weather at Cheltenham for a week or two; from that pretty place they had now come to Brighton, reaching it the previous night.

"Oh, it is delightful!" exclaimed Eliza, gazing at the waves. She had not seen the sea since she crossed it, a little girl, from the West Indies. Those were not yet the days when all people, gentle and simple, told one another that an autumn tour was essential to existence. "Look at the sunbeams sparkling on the ripples and on the white sails of the little boats! Philip, I should like to spend a month here."

"All right," replied Mr. Hamlyn.

They were staying at the Old Ship, a fashionable hotel then for ladies as well as gentlemen, and had come out after breakfast; and they had the pier nearly to themselves at that early hour. A yellow, gouty gentleman, who looked as if he had quarrelled with his liver in some clime all fire and cayenne, stood at the end leaning on his stick, alternately looking at the sea and listlessly watching any advancing stragglers.

There came a sailor, swaying along, a rope in his hand; following him, walked demurely three little girls in frocks and trousers, with their French governess; then came two eye-glassed young men, dandyfied and supercilious, who appeared to have more money than brains—and the jaundiced man went into a gaping fit of lassitude.

Anyone else coming? Yes; a lady and gentleman arm-in-arm: quiet, well-dressed, good-looking. As the invalid watched their approach, a puzzled look of doubt and surprise rose to his countenance. Moving forward a step or two on his gouty legs, he spoke.

"Can it be possible, Hamlyn, that we meet here?"

Even through his dark skin a red flush coursed into Mr. Hamlyn's face. He was evidently very much surprised in his turn, if not startled.

"Captain Pratt!" he exclaimed.

"Major Pratt now," was the answer, as they shook hands. "That wretched climate played the deuce with me, and they graciously gave me a step and allowed me to retire upon it. The very deuce, I

assure you, Philip. Beg pardon, ma'am," he added seeing the lady look at him.

"My wife, Mrs. Hamlyn," spoke her husband.

Major Pratt contrived to lift his hat, and bow: which feat, what with his gouty hands and his helpless legs and his great invalid stick, was a work of time. "I saw your marriage in *The Times*, Hamlyn, and wondered whether it could be you, or not: I didn't know, you see, that you were over here. Wish you luck; and you also, ma'am. Hope it will turn out more fortunate for you, Philip, than ——"

"Where are you staying?" broke in Mr. Hamlyn, as if something were frightening him.

"At some lodgings over yonder, where they fleece me," replied the Major. "You should see the bill they've brought me in for last week. They've made me eat four pounds of butter and five joints of meat, besides poultry and pickles and a fruit pie! Why, I live mostly upon dry toast; hardly dare touch an ounce of meat in a day. When I had 'em up before me, the harpies, they laid it upon my servant's appetite—old Saul, you know. *He* answered them."

Mrs. Hamlyn laughed. "There are two articles that are very convenient, as I have heard, to some of the lodging-house keepers: their lodgers' servant, and their own cat."

"By Jove, ma'am, yes!" said the Major. "But I've given warning to this lot where I am."

Saying au revoir to Major Pratt, Mr. Hamlyn walked down the pier again with his wife. "Who is he, Philip?" she asked. "You seem to know him well."

"Very well. He is a sort of connection of mine, I believe," laughed Mr. Hamlyn, "and I saw a good deal of him in India a few years back. He is greatly changed. I hardly think I should have known him had he not spoken. It's his liver, I suppose."

Leaving his wife at the hotel, Mr. Hamlyn went back again to Major Pratt, much to the lonely Major's satisfaction, who was still leaning on his substantial stick as he gazed at the water.

"The sight of you has brought back to my mind all that unhappy business, Hamlyn," was his salutation. "I shall have a fit of the jaundice now, I suppose! Here—let's sit down a bit."

"And the sight of you has brought it to mine," said Mr. Hamlyn, as he complied. "I have been striving to drive it out of my remembrance."

"I know little about it," observed the Major. "She never wrote to me at all afterwards, and you wrote me but two letters: the one announcing the fact of her disgrace; the other, the calamity and the deaths."

"That is quite enough to know; don't ask me to go over the details to you personally," said Mr. Hamlyn in a tone of passionate discomfort. "So utterly repugnant to me is the remembrance

altogether, that I have never spoken of it—even to my present wife."

"Do you mean you've not told her you were once a married man?" cried Major Pratt.

"No, I have not."

"Then you've shown a lack of judgment which I wouldn't have given you credit for, my friend," declared the Major. "A man may whisper to his girl any untoward news he pleases of his past life, and she'll forgive and forget; aye, and worship him all the more for it, though it were the having set fire to a church: but if he keeps it as a bonne bouchée to drop out after marriage, when she has him fast and tight, she'll curry-comb his hair for him in style. Believe that."

Mr. Hamlyn laughed.

"There never was a hidden skeleton between man and wife yet but it came to light sooner or later," went on the Major. "If you are wise, you will tell her at once, before somebody else does."

"What 'somebody?' Who is there here that knows it?"

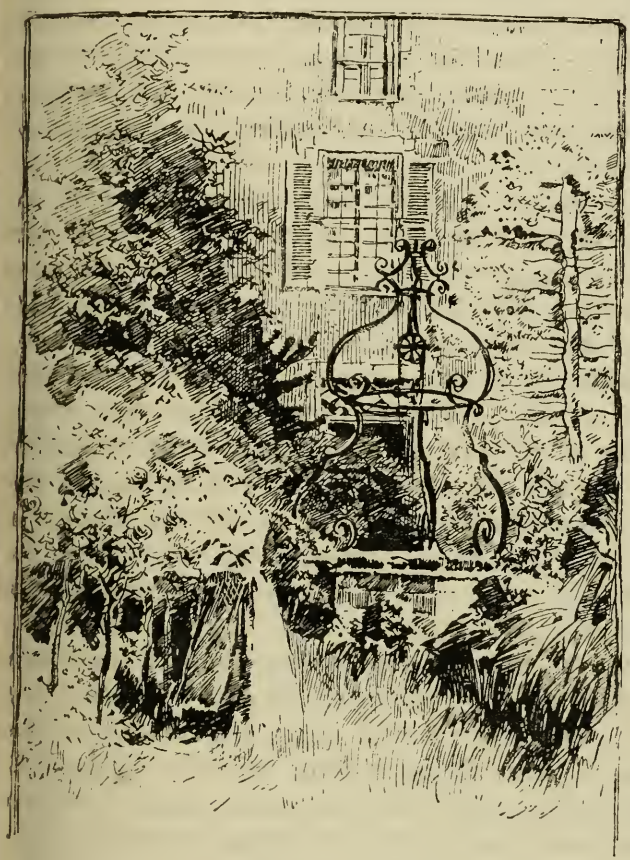
"Why, as to 'here,' I know it, and nearly spoke of it before her, as you must have heard; and my servant knows it. That's nothing, you'll say; we can be quiet, now I have the cue: but you are always liable to meet with people who knew you in those days, and who knew *her*. Take my advice, Philip Hamlyn, and tell your wife. Go and do it now."

"I daresay you are right," said the younger man, awaking out of a reverie. "Of the two evils it may be the lesser." And with lagging steps, and eyes that seemed to have weights to them, he set out to walk back to the Old Ship Hotel.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THE BRETONS AT HOME.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.



St. Pol de Léon.

THE English courage and constitution, for which Madame Hellard of the Hôtel d'Europe professed so much admiration, carried us through the ordeal of a sound drenching. Perhaps our escape was partly due to firmness of will, which goes for much; perhaps in part to the dose of strong waters added to the black coffee our loquacious but interesting hostess at the little auberge by the river-side had brewed for us.

"Had we been to Roscoff?" she had asked us on that memorable afternoon, when the clouds opened all their waterspouts and threatened the world with a second deluge. And we had replied that we had not seen Roscoff, but hoped to do so the following day, wind and weather permitting. Not that we had to reach Roscoff by water; but the elements can make themselves quite as disagreeable on land as at séa: and like the Marines might take for their motto, Per Mare, Per Terram.

The next day wind and weather were not permitting. Madame Hellard clasped her hands with a favourite and pathetic gesture that would melt the hardest heart and dispose it to grant the most outrageous request. She bemoaned our fate and the uncertainty of the Breton climate.

"Enfin!" she concluded, "the climate of la Petite Bretagne is very much the same as that of la Grande Bretagne, from all I have heard. You must be accustomed to these variations. When the

Saxons came over and settled here centuries and centuries ago, and peopled our little country, they brought their weather with them. It has never changed. Like the Breton temperament, it is founded upon a rock—though I often wish it were a little more pliable and responsive. Changes are good sometimes. I am not of those who think what is must always be best. If I were in your Parliament—but you don't have ladies in your Parliament, though they seem to have a footing everywhere else—I should be a Liberal; without going too far, bien-intendu; I am all for progress, but with moderation."

To-day there seemed no prospect of even moderately fine weather, and we could only improve our time by cultivating the beauties of Morlaix under weeping skies.

Its quaint old streets certainly have an unmistakable, an undying charm, which seems to be in touch with all seasons. Blue skies will light them up and cause them to stand out with almost a joyous air; the declining sun will illumine their latticed panes with a fire and flame mysterious with the weight of generations; strong lights and shadows will be thrown by gables and deep recesses, and sculptured porches; by the "aprons" that protect the carven beams, and the eaves that stand out so strongly in outline against the background of the far-off sky. And if those skies are sad and sorrowful, immediately the quaint houses put on all the dignity of age: from every gable end, from every lattice, every niche and grotesque, the rain trickles and falls, and they, too, you would say, are weeping for their lost youth.

But they are too old to do that. It is not the very aged who weep for their early days; they have forgotten what is now too far off to be realised. They weep who stand upon the boundary line separating youth from age; who at once look behind and beyond: look back with longing upon the glow and romance which have not yet died out of the heart, and forward into the future where romance can have no place, and nothing is visible excepting what has been called the calmness and repose of old age.

> "There's not a joy the world can give like that it takes away,
> When the glow of early thought declines in feeling's dull decay;
> 'Tis not on youth's smooth cheek the blush alone which fades so fast,
> But the bloom of early youth is gone ere youth itself be past."

The reader will probably quote the remainder for himself; Byron never wrote truer or sadder lines. And we all know of a great man in history who, at eighty years old, turned to his friend and, pointing to a young chimney-sweeper, exclaimed: "I would give my wealth, fame, coronet—all, to be once more that boy's age, even if I must take his place!" One of the saddest sentences, perhaps, that one of eighty could utter.

To-day every house was weeping. Even the women who kept the stalls in the covered market-place dispensed their butter and poultry

their fruit and flowers, with a melancholy air, and looked as if they had not the courage to keep up the prices. Ladies and housekeepers wandered from stall to stall followed by their maids, a few of whom wore picturesque caps, conspicuous in their rarity: for even Breton stubbornness has yielded very much, where, for once, it should have been firm as a rock, and it is only in the remoter districts that costume is still general. We were invited to many purchases as we looked around, and had we yielded to all might have stocked Madame Hellard's larder to overflowing: a very unnecessary attention, for the table is kept on the most liberal principles.

It was really alarming to see the quantity that some of the Bretons managed to appropriate in an incredibly short space of time at the table d'hôte. H. C., who was accustomed to the æsthetic table of his aunt, Lady Maria, more than once had to retire to his room, and recover his composure, and wonder whether his own appetite would ever return to him. And once or twice when I unfeelingly drew attention to an opposite neighbour and wondered what Lady Maria would say to it, he could only reply by a dismal groan which caused the opposite neighbour for a moment to arrest his mission of destruction and stare.

On the second occasion that it happened he called up the head waitress—they were all women who served in the room—and asked her if the "Monsieur Anglais vis-à-vis" was not ill.

"He looks pale and thin," he added, feelingly, and might well think so, placed in juxtaposition with himself, for he was large and round, with cheeks, as Tony Lumpkin would have said, broad and red as a pulpit cushion. It was simply cause and effect.

In his case, too, the cause was not confined to eating. Two bottles of the white wine, supplied gratis in unlimited quantities at the table d' hôte disappeared during the repast; and we began to think of Mr. Weller senior, the tea-party, and the effect of the unlimited cups upon Mr. Stiggins. "I come from Quimper," we heard the Breton say on one occasion to his next-door neighbour, "and I think it the best town in France, not excepting Paris. Where do you come from?"

"From Rouen," replied the neighbour, a far more refined specimen of humanity, who spoke in quiet tones. "I am not a Breton."

"So much the worse for you," returned our modern Daniel Lambert unceremoniously. "The French would beat the world, and the Bretons would beat the French. Then I suppose you don't deal in horses?"

"No," with an amused smile. "I am only a humble architect." But we discovered afterwards that he was celebrated all over France. Travelling, no less than adversity, makes us acquainted with strange bedfellows.

The head waitress was a very interesting character, much older than the other waitresses, whom she took under her wing with a

species of hen-like protection, keeping them well up to their duties, and rating them soundly where they failed. She was a Bretonne, but of the better type, with sharp, clearly-cut features, and eyes full of vivacity, that seemed in all places at once. She wore list shoes, and would flit like a phantom from one end of the room to the other, her cap-strings flying behind her, directing, surveying all. Very independent, too, was she, and evidently held certain of her guests in sovereign contempt.

"This terrible fair!" she would say, "which lasts three days, and gives us no rest and no peace; and one or two of those terrible dealers, who have a greater appetite than their own cattle, and would eat from six o'clock until midnight, if one only let them! Monsieur Hellard loses pretty well by some of them; I am sure of it!"

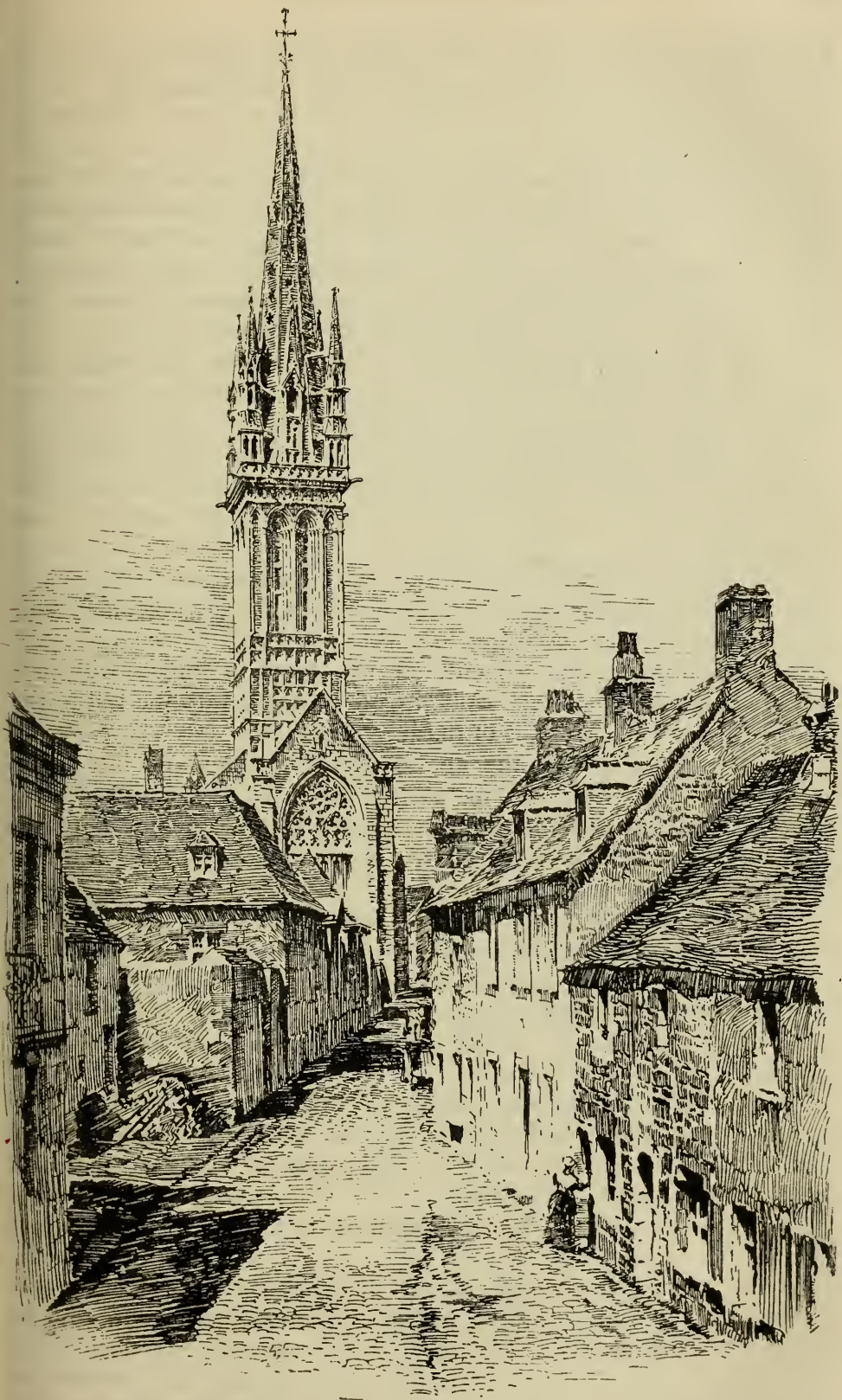
The lift which brought things up from the kitchen was at the end of the room, and every now and then she would go to it, and in a shrill voice, which seemed to penetrate to very far-off regions—Halls of Eblis or caverns measureless to man—cry out "LÂ SUITE!" the *a* very much *circumflexed* with true Breton pronunciation.

It was amusing, occasionally, when a certain dish was sent up that in some way or other did not please her, to hear it sent down again in the return lift accompanied by a reprimand that was very much to the point, and was audible to the assembled room. The whole table on those occasions would break into laughter, for her reprimand was always spiced with inimitable humour, which penetrated even the impervious Breton intellect.

Then she would fly down the room with the dish returned to her satisfaction, a suppressed smile lurking about the corners of her mouth, and, addressing the table at large with a freedom that only the French can assume without familiarity, exclaim: "It is not because some of you give the chef too much to do, with your enormous capacities, that I am going to allow him to neglect his work." And the table would laugh again and applaud Catherine, the head waitress. For she was very capable and therefore very popular, as ministering well to their wants. And the Breton temperament is seldom sensitive.

She had her favourites, to whom she was devoted, making no secret of her preference. We were amongst the fortunate, and soon fell into her good graces. Woe betide anyone who attempted to appropriate our seats before we entered; or a waitress who brought us the last remnants of a dish—for nothing seemed to escape her observation. She was most concerned about H. C.'s want of appetite and ethereal appearance—certainly a startling contrast to some of her experiences.

"Monsieur hasn't the appetite of a lark," she complained to me one morning. "Tell him that the Breton climate is as difficult to fight as the Breton soldier; and if he does not eat, he will be washed away



Creisker, St. Pol de Léon.

by the rains. WHAT EYES!" she exclaimed; "quite the eyes of a poet. I am sure monsieur is a poet. Have I not reason?"

Thus proving herself even more that an excellent waitress—a woman of penetration.

We have said that the day after our aquatic adventure at the little inn by the river-side, "Au retour de la Pêche," the rain came down with vengeance. There was no doubt about its energy; and this, at least, was consoling. Nothing is more annoying than your uncertain morning, when you don't know whether to start or stay at home. On these occasions, whichever you do turns out a mistake.

But the following day our patience was rewarded by bright sunshine and blue skies. "The very day for Roscoff," said Madame Hellard; "though I cannot think why you are determined to pay it a visit. There is absolutely nothing to see. It is a sad town, and its streets are given over to melancholy. Of course, you will take St. Pol de Léon on your way. It is equally quiet, and even less picturesque."

This was not very encouraging, but we have learned to beware of other people's opinions: they often praise what is worthless, and pass over delights and treasures in absolute silence.

So, remembering this, we entered the hotel omnibus with our sketching materials and small cameras, and struggled up the hill to the railway station and the level of the huge viaduct.

On our way we passed the abode of our refined and interesting antiquarian. He was standing at his door, the same patient look upon his beautiful face, the same resigned attitude. He caught sight of us and woke up out of a reverie. His spirit always seemed taking some far-off flight.

"Ces messieurs are not leaving?" he cried, for we passed slowly and close to him. There was evidence of slight anxiety or disappointment in his tone; the crucifix yet hung on his walls, and H. C.'s mind still hovered in the balance.

"No," we replied. "We are going to Roscoff, and shall be back to-night."

"Roscoff? It is lovely," he said. "I know you will like it. But it is very quiet, and only appeals to the artistic temperament. You will see few shops there; no antiquarians; and the people are stupid. Still, the place is remarkable."

The omnibus passed on and we were soon steaming away from Morlaix.

It was a desperately slow train. The surrounding country was not very interesting, but the journey, fortunately, was short. As we passed the celebrated St. Pol de Léon on the way, we decided to take it first. Roscoff was the terminus, and appeared like the ends of the earth at the very extreme point of land, jutting into the sea and looking out upon the English Channel. If vision could have reached so far, we might have seen the opposite English coast, and peered

right into Plymouth Sound ; where, the last time that we climbed its heights straight from the hospitality of a delightful cruise in a man-of-war, the band of the Marine Artillery was ravishing all ears and discoursing sweet music in a manner that few bands could rival.

We approached St. Pol de Léon, which may be described as an ecclesiastical, almost a dead city. But how glorious and interesting some of these dead cities are, with their silent streets and their remnants of the past ! The shadow of death seems upon them, and they impress you with a mute eloquence more thrilling and effective than the greatest oration ever listened to.

As we approached St. Pol, which lay half a mile or so from the railway, its churches and towers were so disposed that the place looked like one huge ecclesiastical building. These stood out with wonderful effect and clearness against the background of the sky.

We left the station, and thought we might as well use the omnibus in waiting. It was small and held about four passengers. As soon as we had taken our seats two fat priests came up and entered. We felt rather crowded, and, like the moping owl, resented the intrusion ; but when three stout ladies immediately followed, and looked appealingly at the state of affairs, it was too much. We gave up our seats and walked ; and presently the omnibus passed us, one of the ladies having wedged herself in by a miracle between the priests. It would take a yet greater miracle to unpack them again. The driver looked round with a smile—he had admitted us into the omnibus and released us—and, pointing to the roof with his whip, humorously exclaimed : " Complêt ! "

The towers and steeples of St. Pol de Léon raised themselves mightily in front of us as we walked, beautiful and imposing. The town dates back to the sixth century, and though once important, is now almost deserted. Pol, or Paul, a monk, who, according to one tradition was Welsh, according to another Cornish, went over to a neighbouring island about the year 530 and there established a monastery. He became so famous for his piety that a Breton king founded a bishopric at Léon, and presented him with the mitre. The name of the town was then changed to St. Pol de Léon. His successors were men distinguished for their goodness, and St. Pol became one of the most famous ecclesiastical towns in Brittany. Churches were built, monasteries and convents were founded.

In course of time its reputation for wealth excited the envy of the Counts of Léon, and in 875 the Normans came down upon it, pillaged the town and devastated the cathedral. It was one of those Counts of Léon who so vigorously claimed his rights " de bris et d'épaves "—the laws of flotsam and jetsam—esteeming priceless as diamonds certain rocks upon which vessels were frequently wrecked. This law, rigorously enforced through long ages, has now almost died out.

In the fourteenth century du Guesclin took possession of the town

in the name of Charles V., but the French garrison was put to the sword by the barbarous Duke John IV. of Brittany in the year 1374. In 1590 the inhabitants of the town joined a plot formed for their emancipation, and the neighbouring villages rose up in insurrection against an army of three hundred thousand men raised by the Convention. The rebels were conquered after two disastrous battles—one within, the other without the town—when an immense number of the peasants were slain.

Seeing it to-day, no one would imagine that it had once passed such stirring times: had once been a place of importance, wealth, and envy. Its streets are deserted, its houses grey and sad-looking. The place seems lifeless. The shadows cast by the sun fall athwart the silent, grass-grown streets, and have it all their own way. During our short visit I do not think we met six people. Yet the town has seven thousand inhabitants. Some we saw within their houses; and here and there the sound of the loom broke the deadly silence, and in small cottages pale-faced men bent laboriously over their shuttles. The looms were large and seemed to take up two-thirds of the room, which was evidently the living-room also. Many were furnished with large open cabinets or wardrobes carved in Breton work, rough but genuine.

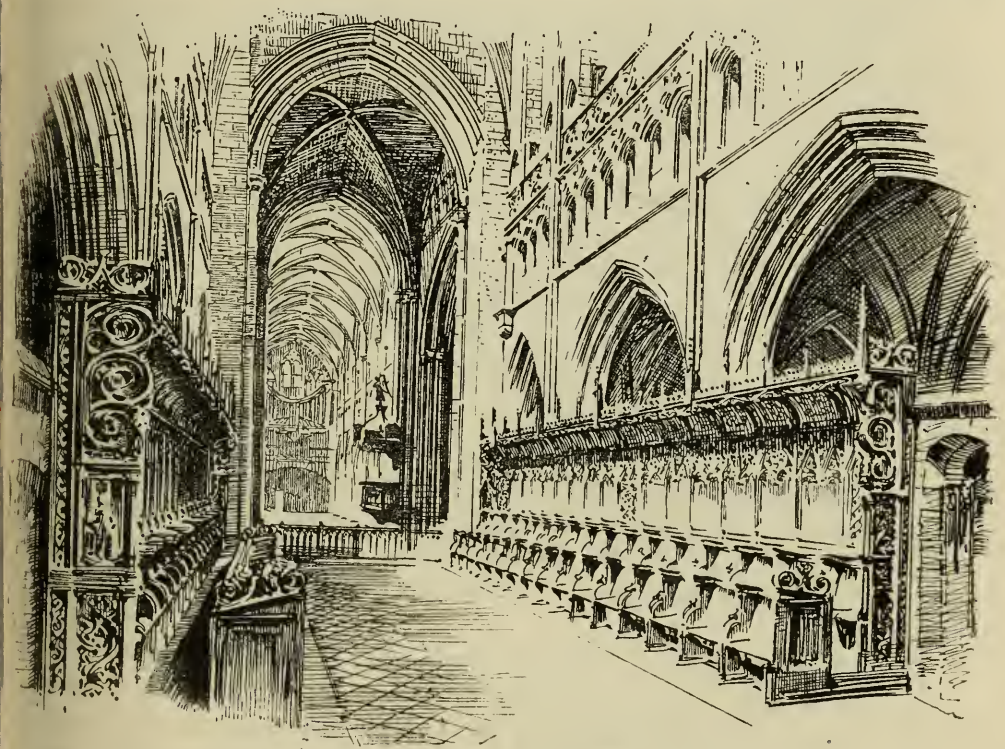
Passing up the long narrow street leading to the open and deserted market-place, the Chapelle de Creisker rises before you with its wonderful clock-tower that is still the pride of the town. The original chapel, according to tradition, was founded by a young girl whom St. Kirec, Archdeacon of Léon in the sixth century, had miraculously cured of paralysis; but the greater part of the present chapel, including the tower and spire, was built towards the end of the fourteenth century, by John IV., Duke of Brittany. The porches are fifteenth century; the north porch, in the Flamboyant style, being richly decorated with figures and foliage deeply and elaborately carved. On the south side are six magnificent windows, unfortunately not filled in with magnificent glass. The interior possesses nothing remarkable, excepting its fine rose window and the opposite east window, distinguished for their size and tracery.

The tower is its glory. It is richly ornamented, and surmounted by a cornice so projecting that, until the eye becomes accustomed to it, the slender tower beneath seems overweighted: an impression not quite lost at a first visit. The light and graceful tower, two hundred and sixty-three feet high, rises between the nave and the choir, upon four arches sustained by four quadrangular pillars four yards wide, composed of innumerable small columns almost resembling bundles of rods, in which the arms of Jean Prégent, Chancellor of Brittany and Bishop of Léon in 1436, may be seen on the keystone of each arch. The upper tower, like those of the cathedral, is pierced by narrow bays, supported on either side by false bays. From the upper platform, with its four-leaved balustrade, rises the

beautiful open-work spire, somewhat resembling that of St. Peter's at Caen, and flanked by four turrets. This tower is said to have been built by an English architect, but there is no authority for the tradition.

Proceeding onwards to the market-place, there rises the cathedral, far better placed than many of the cathedrals abroad. It is one of the remarkable buildings of Brittany, possessing certain distinguishing features peculiar to the Breton churches.

The cathedral dates from three periods. A portion of the north transept is Romanesque; the nave, west front, and towers date from



INTERIOR OF CATHEDRAL, ST. POL DE LÉON.

the thirteenth century and the commencement of the fourteenth; the interior, almost entirely Gothic, and very striking, lost much of its beauty when restored in 1866. It is two hundred and sixty feet long and fifty-two feet high to the vaulting, the latter being attributed to William of Rochefort, who was Bishop of Léon in 1349. The towers are very fine, with central storeys pierced by lancet windows, like those of the Creisker. The south transept has a fine circular window, with tracery cut in granite.

The stalls, the chief beauty of the choir, are magnificently carved, and date from 1512. The choir, completely surrounded by a stone screen, is larger and more ornamented than the nave, and is surrounded by double aisles, ending in a Lady Chapel possessing some good carved woodwork of the sixteenth century.

The towers are almost equal in dimension but somewhat different in design. One of them—the south tower—possesses a small lancet doorway on the west side, called the Lepers' Doorway, where probably lepers entered to attend mass in days gone by, remaining unseen and isolated from the rest of the congregation. The south wall possesses a magnificent rose window, above which is another window, called the *Window of Excommunication*. The rose window is unfortunately filled with modern glass, but one or two of the side windows are good. The basin for holy-water, dating from the twelfth century, is said to have been the tomb of Conan Mériadec, first of the Breton kings.

A small bell, said to have belonged to St. Pol, is kept in the church, and on the day of the *Pardon* of Léon (the chief fête of the year) is carried up and down the nave and rung vigorously over the heads of the faithful to preserve them from headache and ear-ache.

The best view of the interior is obtained by standing in the choir, as near as possible to the tomb of St. Pol—distinguished by a black marble slab immediately in front of the altar—and looking westward. The long-drawn aisle is very fine; the stalls and decoration of the choir stand out well, whilst the Early-Pointed arches on either side are marked by beauty and refinement. The west end of the nave seems quite far off and becomes almost dream-like.

Yet in some way the Cathedral of St. Pol de Léon left upon us a certain feeling of disappointment. The interior did not seem equal to the exterior; and as the church has been much praised at different times by those capable of distinguishing the good in architecture, we attributed this impression to the effect of its comparatively recent restoration.

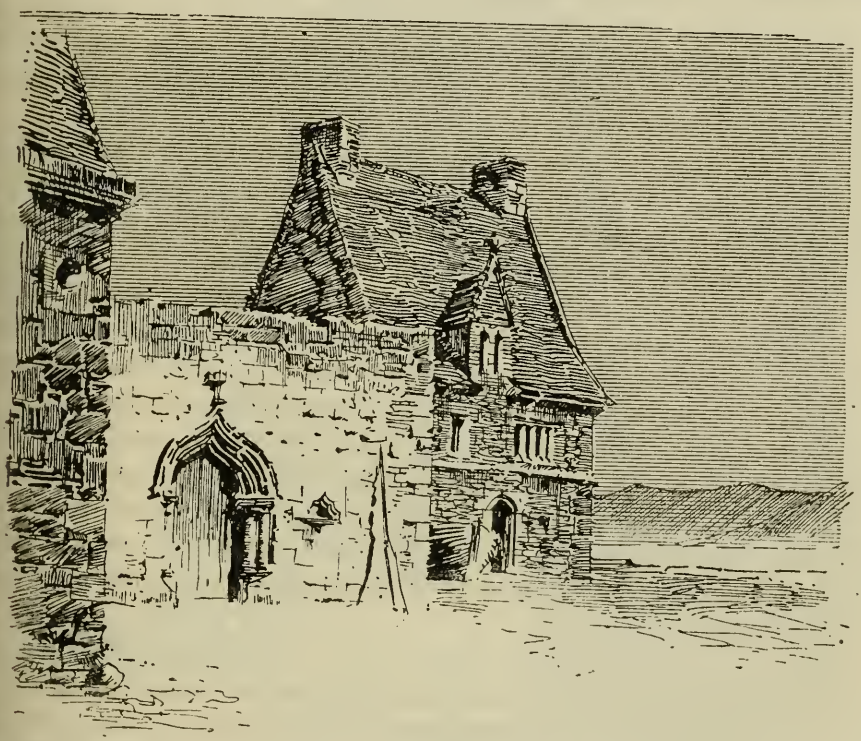
Behind the cathedral is an old prebendal house, belonging to the sixteenth century and possessing many interesting details. Beyond it again was the small chapel of St. Joseph, attached to the convent of the Ursuline nuns, founded in 1630. For St. Pol de Léon is still essentially a religious and ecclesiastical town, living on its past glory and reputation. Once immensely rich, it now impresses one with a feeling of sadness and poverty.

One wonderful little glimpse we had of an earthly paradise.

Not far from the cathedral we had strayed into a garden, for the great gates were open and the vision dazzled us. We had rarely seen such a wealth of flowers. Large rose-trees, covered with blooms outvied each other in scenting the air with delicious perfume. Some of these trees or bushes were many yards round. Immense rhododendrons also flourished. Exquisite and graceful trees rose above them; the laburnum, no longer in bloom, acacias, and the lovely pepper tree. Standing out from a wealth of blossom and verdure was an old well, surmounted by some ancient and picturesque iron work. Beyond it was a yet more ancient and picturesque house

grey stone, an equally venerable flight of steps leading up to the front entrance. The house was large, and whatever it might be now, must once have fulfilled some ecclesiastical purpose. It occupied the whole length of the large garden, the remainder being closed in by high walls. Opposite, to the right, uprose the Bishop's palace, and beyond it the lovely towers and spires of the cathedral.

It was one of those rare scenes very seldom met with, which plunge one at once out of the world into an Arcadia beautiful as dreamland. We stood and gazed, silent with rapture and admiration; threw conventionality to the winds, forgot that we had no right



CHAPEL OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS, ROSCOFF.

here, and wandered about, inhaling the scent of the flowers, luxuriating in their rich colours, feasting our eyes and senses on all the old-world beauty of architecture by which we were surrounded; carrying our sight upwards to the blue skies and wondering if we had not been transported to some paradise beyond the veiling. It was the Garden of Eden.

Then suddenly at the open doorway of the house appeared a lady with a wealth of white hair and a countenance full of the beauty of sweetness and age. She was dignified, as became the owner of this fair domain, and her rich robe rustled as she quietly descended the steps.

We now remembered ourselves and our intrusion, yet it was impossible to retreat. We advanced bareheaded to make our humble apologies and sue for grace.

The owner of this earthly paradise made us an elaborate curtsey that surely she had learned at the Tuileries or Versailles in the by-gone days of an illustrious monarchy.

"Monsieur," she said, in a voice that was still full of melody, "do not apologise; I see that you are strangers and foreigners, and you are welcome. This garden might indeed entice anyone to enter. I have grown old here, and my eyes are never tired of beholding the beauties of Nature. In St. Pol we are favoured, you know, in possessing one of the most fertile soils in France."

And then she bade us enter, with a politeness that yet sounded like a command; and we obeyed and passed up the ancient steps into a richly-panelled hall. Over the doorways hung boars' heads, shot by her sons, Countess C—for she told us her name—informed us, in the forests of Brittany.

"They are great sportsmen," she added with a smile, "and you know we Bretons do nothing by halves. Our sportsmen are fierce and strong in the chase, and know nothing of the effeminate pastimes of those who live in more southern latitudes."

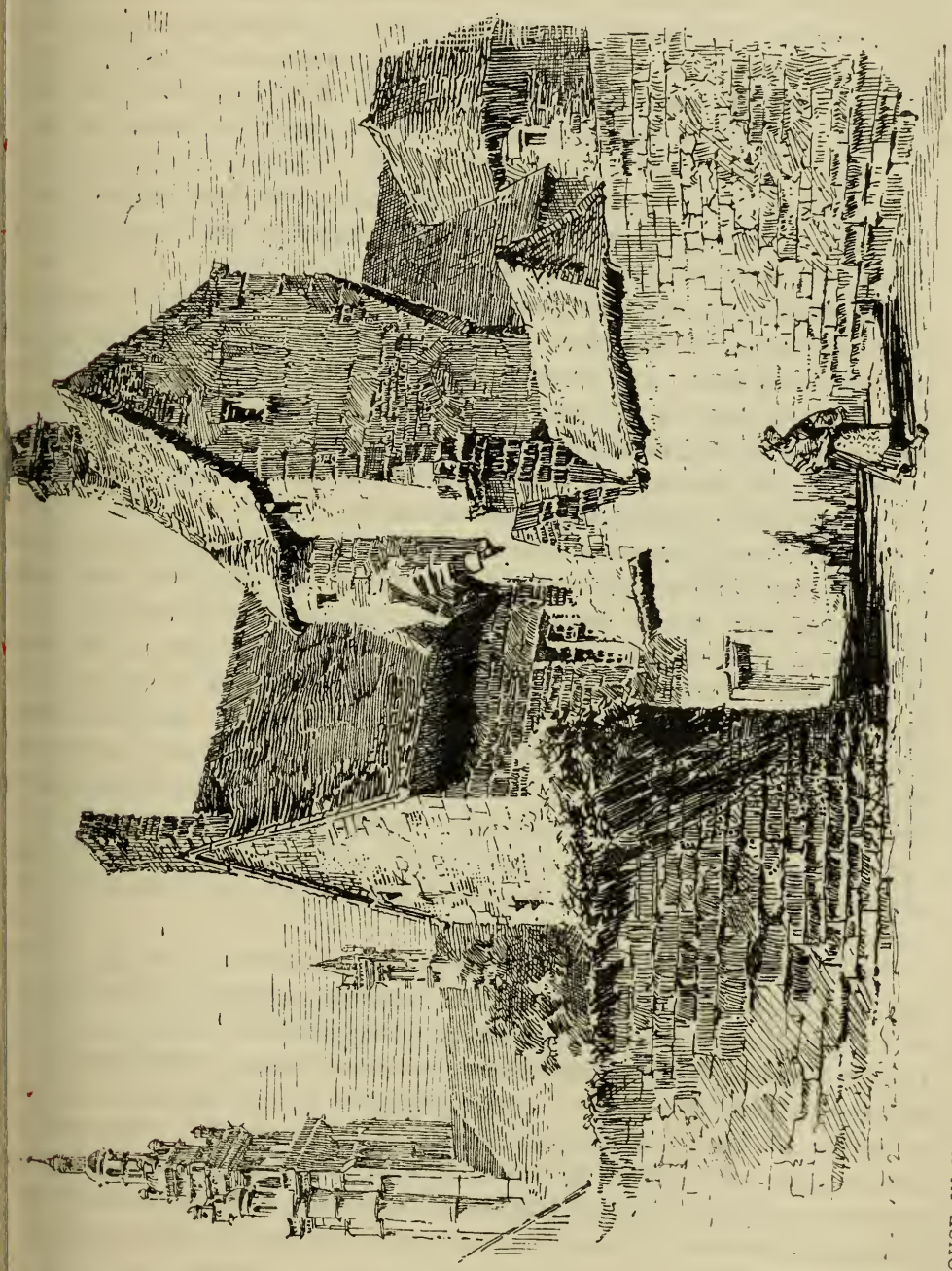
Then, to do us honour, and because she thought it would interest us, she showed us through some of the reception rooms, magnificent with tapestry and carved oak and dark panelling, and family portraits of bygone generations, when people were taken as shepherds and shepherdesses, and the world was a real Arcadia; and everywhere were trophies of the chase. And, conducting us up an ancient oak staircase to a large recess looking to the back, there our dazzled vision saw another garden stretched out before us, longer, broader, than the paradise in front, full of roses and lilies, and a countless number of fruit trees.

"That is my orchard," she said; "but I must have flowers everywhere, and so, all down the borders my lilies and roses scent the air and there I walk and try to make my old age beautiful and contented as every old age ought to be. My young days were passed at Court my later years in this quiet seclusion, out of the world. Alas! there is no more Court for old or young."

Then again we descended into a salon so polished that you could trace your features on the parquet flooring; a room that would have dignified a monarch; a room where everything was old-fashioned and beautiful, subdued and refined; and our hostess, pointing to lovely old chairs covered with tapestry that had been worked a century-and-a-half ago, touched a bell and insisted upon our refreshing ourselves with some wine of the country and a cake peculiar to St. Pol de Léon. It is probable that H.C.'s poetical eyes and ethereal countenance, whilst captivating her heart, had suggested a dangerous delicacy of constitution. These countenances, however, are deceptive; it is often your robust and florid people who fail to reach more than the stage of early manhood.

In response to the bell there entered a Breton maid with cake and

wine on a silver tray. She was youthful and comely, and wore a picturesque Breton cap with mysterious folds, the like of which we had seen neither in Morlaix nor in St. Pol de Léon. As far as the latter town was concerned it was not surprising, since we had met so few of the inhabitants.



House in which the Young Pretender took Refuge after the Battle of Culloden. Roscoff.

The maid curtsied on entering, placed the tray upon the table, curtsied again to her mistress, and withdrew. All was done in absolute silence: the silence of a well-bred domestic and a perfectly organised household. She moved as if her feet had been encased in down.

With her own fair and kindly hands, the Comtesse poured out the red and sparkling liquid, and, breaking the cake, once more bade us welcome.

We would rather have been excused; such hospitality to strangers was so rare, excepting in remote places where the customs of the primitive ages still existed. But hospitality so gracefully and graciously offered had to be met with graciousness and gratitude in return.

"The cake I offer you," she remarked, "is peculiar to St. Pol de Léon. There is a tradition that it has come to us from the days of St. Pol himself, and that the saintly monk-bishop made his daily meal of it. But I feel very sure," she added with a smile, "that those early days of fasting and penance never rejoiced in anything as refined and civilized and as good as this."

And then for a little while we talked of Brittany and the Bretons; and if we could have stayed longer we should have heard many an anecdote and many an experience. But time and a due regard to politeness forbade a "longer lingering," charming as were the old lady's manners and conversation, delightful the atmosphere in which she lived. With mingled stateliness and grace she accompanied us to the wonderful garden and bade us farewell.

"This is your first visit to St. Pol," she said, as she gave us her hand in the English fashion; "I hope it will not be your last. Remember that if ever you come here again my doors will open to you, and a welcome will await you. Only, let your next visit be a longer one. You see that I speak with the freedom of age; and if you think me impulsive in thus tendering hospitality to one hitherto unknown, I must answer that I have lived in the world, and make no mistakes. I believe also in a certain mental mesmerism, which rarely fails. When I saw you enter, something told me that I might come to you. Fare you well!—Sans adieu!" she added as we expressed our gratitude and bent over her hand with an earnest "Au revoir!"

We went our way, both charmed into silence for a time. I felt that we were thinking the same thoughts—rejoicing in our happy fortune in these occasional meetings which flashed across the horizon of our lives and disappeared, not without leaving behind them an abiding effect; an earnest appreciation of human nature and the amount of leaven that must exist in the world. We thought instinctively of Mdlle. Martin, the little Receveuse des Postes de Retraite at Grâce: and of Mdlle. de Pressensé at Villeneuve, who had welcomed us even as the Comtesse had now done; and we felt that we were favoured.

Time was up, and we decided to make this our last impression of St. Pol de Léon. We passed down the quiet streets, under the shadow of the Creisker, out into the open country and the railway station. We were just in time for the train to Roscoff, and in a very few minutes had reached that little terminus.

Immediately we felt more out of the world than ever. There was something so primitive about the station and its surroundings and the people who hovered about, that this seemed a true *finis terre*. It was, however, sufficiently civilized to boast of two omnibuses; curiously constructed machines that, remembering our St. Pol experience, we did not enter. The town was only a little way off, and its church steeple served us as beacon.

We passed a few modern houses near the station, which looked like a settlement in the backwoods with the trees cut down, and then a short open road led to the quiet streets.

Quiet indeed they were, with a look about them yet more old-world, deadly and deserted even than St. Pol de Léon. The houses are nearly all built of that grey *Kersanton* stone, which has a cold and cheerless tone full of melancholy; like some of the far away Scotch or Welsh villages, where nature seems to have died out, no verdure is to be seen, and the very hedges, that in softer climes bud and blossom and put forth the promise of spring to make glad the heart of man, are replaced by dry walls that have no beauty in them.

Yet at once we felt that there was a certain charm about Roscoff, and a very marked individuality. Never yet, in Brittany, had we felt so out of the world and removed from civilization. Its quaint houses are substantial though small, and many of them still possess the old cellars that open by large winged doors into the streets, where the poorer people live an underground life resembling that of the moles. The cellars go far back, and light never penetrates into their recesses.

Again, some of the houses had courtyards of quaint and interesting architecture. One of them especially is worth visiting. A long narrow passage leads you to a quaint yard with seven arches supported by columns, with an upper gallery supported by more columns. It might have formed part of a miniature cloister in days gone by.

On the way towards the church, we passed the chapel dedicated to St. Ninian, of which nothing remains now but the bare enclosure and the ancient and beautiful gateway. This, ruined as it is, is the most interesting relic in Roscoff. It was here that Mary Queen of Scots landed when only five years old, to be married to the Dauphin of France. The form of her foot was cut out in the rock on which she first stepped, but we failed to see it. Perhaps time and the effect of winds and waves have worn it away. Footsteps disappear even on a stronger foundation than the sands of time. The little chapel was built to commemorate her landing, and its ruins are surrounded by a halo of sadness and romance. Four days after her landing she was betrothed. But the happy careless childhood was quickly to pass away; the "fevered life of a throne" was most essentially to be hers; plot and counterplot were to embitter her days; until at last, at the bidding of "great Elizabeth," those wonderful eyes were to close for

the last time upon the world, and that lovely head was to be laid upon the block.

The sad history overshadows the little chapel in Roscoff as a halo; for us overshadowed the whole town.

Adjoining the chapel still exists the house in which the child-queen lodged on landing, also with a very interesting courtyard.

Looking down towards the church from this point, the houses wore a grey, sad and deserted aspect. The church tower rises above them, quaint and curious, in the Renaissance style. The interior is only remarkable for some curious alabaster bas-reliefs, representing the Passion and the Resurrection; an old tomb serving as *bénitier*, some ancient fonts, and the clever sculpturing of a boat representing the arms of the town; a device also found on the left front of the tower.

There is also a large ossuary in the corner of the small churchyard, now disused. These ossuaries, or *reliquaires*, in the graveyards of Brittany were built to carry out a curious and somewhat barbarous custom. It was considered by "those of old time" to be paying deference to the dead to dig up their coffins after a certain number of years, and to place the skulls and bones in the ossuary, arranging them on shelves and labelling them in a British Museum style so that all might gaze upon them as they went by. This custom is still kept up in some places; for, as we have said, the Bretons are a slow moving people in the way of progress, and cling to their habits and customs as tenaciously as the Medes and Persians did to their laws. They are not ambitious, and what sufficed for the sires a generation or two ago suffices for the sons to-day.

But to us, the chief beauty of the town was its little port, with its stone pier. The houses leading down to it are the quaintest in Roscoff, of sixteenth century date, with many angles and gables. In one of them lodged Charles Stuart, the Young Pretender, when he escaped after the battle of Culloden, the quaintest and most interesting of all.

Looking back from the end of the jetty, it lies prominently before you, together with the whole town, forming a group full of wonderful tone and picturesque beauty. In the foreground are the vessels in the harbour, with masts rising like a small forest, and flags gaily flying. The water which plashes against the stone pier is the greenest, purest, most translucent ever seen. It dazzled by its brilliancy and appeared to "hold the light." Before us stretched the great Atlantic, to-day calm and sleeping and reflecting the sun travelling homewards; but often lashed to furious moods, which break madly over the pier, and send their spray far over the houses. Few scenes in Brittany are more characteristic and impressive than this little unknown town.

A narrow channel lies between Roscoff and L'Ile de Batz, which would form a fine harbour of refuge if it were not for the strong currents for ever running there. At high water the island is half

submerged. It is here that St. Pol first came from Cornwall, intending to live there the remainder of his life; but, as we have seen, he was made Bishop of Léon, and had to take up his abode in the larger town.

No tree of any height is to be seen here, but the tamarisk grows in great abundance. All the men are sailors and pass their lives upon the water, coming home merely to rest. The women cultivate the ground. The church possesses, and preserves as its greatest treasure, a stole worn by St. Pol. Tradition has it that when St. Pol

ROSCOFF.

landed, the island was a prey to a fierce and fiery dragon, whom the monk conquered by throwing his stole round the neck of the monster and commanding it to cast itself into the sea; a command it instantly and amiably obeyed by rushing to the top of a high rock and plunging for ever beneath the waves. The rock is still called in Breton language Toul ar Sarpent, signifying Serpent's Hole.

Roscoff itself is extremely fertile; the deadly aspect of the little town is not extended to the surrounding plains. The climate is much influenced by the Gulf Stream, and the winters are temperate. Flowers and vegetables grow here all the year round that in less favoured districts are found only in summer. Like Provence in the far South, Roscoff is famous for its primeurs, or early vegetables. If

you go to some of the great markets in Paris in the spring and notice certain country people with large round hats, very primitive in appearance, disposing of these vegetables, you may at once know them for Bretons from Roscoff. You will not fall in love with them; they are plain, honest, and stupid. We found the few people we spoke to in Roscoff quite answering to this description, and could make nothing of them.

On our way back to the station we visited the great natural curiosity of the place: a fig tree whose branches cover an area of nearly two hundred square yards, supported by blocks of wood or by solid masonry built up for the purpose. It yields an immense quantity of fruit, and would shield a small army beneath its foliage. Its immense trunk is knotted and twisted about in all directions; but the tree is full of life and vigour, and probably without parallel in the world.

Soon after this, we were once more steaming towards Morlaix, our head-quarters. As we passed St. Pol de Léon, its towers and steeples stood out grandly in the gathering twilight. Before us there rose up the vision of the aged Countess who had received and entertained us with so much kindness and hospitality. It was not too much to say that we longed to renew our experience, to pass not hours but days in that charmed and charming abode, refined by everything that was old-world and artistic; and to number our hostess amongst those friends whom time and chance, silence and distance, riches or poverty, life or death, can never change.

We re-entered Morlaix with the shadows of night. Despising the omnibus, we went down Jacob's Ladder, rejoicing and revelling in all the old-world atmosphere about us, and on our way passed our Antiquarian. He was still at his doorway, evidently watching for our arrival, and might have been motionless as a wooden sentry ever since we had left him in the morning.

The workshop was lighted up, and the old cabinets and the modern wood-carving looked picturesque and beautiful in the lights and shadows thrown by the lamps. The son, handsome as an Adonis, was bending over some delicate carving that he was chiseling, flushed with the success of his work, yet outwardly strangely quiet and gentle. The cherub we had seen a morning or two ago at the doorstep ought now to have been in bed and asleep. Instead of that he was perched upon a table, and with large, wide-opened blue eyes was gazing with all the innocence and inquiry of infancy into his father's face, as if he would there read the mystery of life and creation, which the wondering gaze of early childhood seems for ever asking.

It was a rare picture. The rift within the lute was out of sight upstairs, and there was nothing to disturb the harmony of perfection. The child saw us, and immediately held out his little arms with a confiding gesture and a crow of delight that would have won over the sternest misanthropist, as if he recognised us for old friends be

tween whom there existed a large amount of affection and an excellent understanding. His father threw down his chisel, and catching him up in his arms perched him upon his shoulder and ran him up and down the room, while the little fellow shrieked with happiness. Then both disappeared up the staircase, the child looking, in all his loveliness, as if he would ask us to follow—a perfect representation of trust and contentment, as he felt himself borne upwards, safe and secure from danger, in the strong arms of his natural protector.

The old man turned to us with a sigh. Was he thinking of his own past youth, when he, too, was once the principal actor in a counterpart scene? Or of a day, which could not be very far off, when such a scene as this and all earthly scenes must for him for ever pass away? Or of the little rift within the lute? Who could tell?

"So, sirs, you are back once more," was all he remarked. "Have you seen Roscoff? Was I not right in praising it?"

"You were, indeed," we replied. "It is full of indescribable beauty and interest. Why is it so little known?"

"Because there are so few true artists in the world," he answered. "It cannot appeal to any other temperament. Those who see things only with the eyes and not with the soul, will never care for it. And so it has made no noise in the world, and few visit it. Of those who do, probably many think more of the wonderful fig tree than of the exquisite tone of the houses, the charm of the little port, the matchless purity of the water."

We felt he was right. Then he pointed to the marvellous crucifix that hung upon the wall, and seemed by its beauty and sacredness almost to sanctify the room.

"Is it not a wonderful piece of art?" he cried, with quiet enthusiasm. "If Michel Angelo had ever carved in ivory, I should say it was his work. But be that as it may, it is the production of a great master."

We promised to return. There was something about the old man and his surroundings which compelled one to do so. It was so rare to find three generations of perfection, about whom there clung a charm indescribable as the perfume that clings to the rose. We passed out into the night, and our last look showed him standing in his quaint little territory, thrown out in strong relief by the lamplight, gazing in rapt devotion upon his treasures, all the religious fervour of the true Breton temperament shining out of his spiritual face, thinking perhaps of the "one far-off Divine event" that for him was growing so very near.

A SOCIAL DÉBUT.

IT is hoped that the following anecdote of the ways and customs of that rare animal, the modest, diffident youth (soon, naturalists assure us, to become as extinct in these islands as the Dodo), may afford a moment's amusement to the superior young people who rule journalism, politics, and life for us to-day.

Some ten years ago Mr. Edward Everett came up from the wilds of Devonshire to study law with Braggart and Pushem, in Chancery Lane. He was placed to board, by a prudent mother, with a quiet family in Bayswater.

That even quiet Bayswater families are not without their dangers Everett's subsequent career may be taken as proof, but with this, at present, I have nothing to do. I merely intend to give the history of his début in society, although the title is one of which, after reading the following pages, you may find reason to complain.

Everett had not been many weeks in London when he received, quite unexpectedly, his first invitation to an evening party.

His mother's interest had procured it for him, and it came from Lady Charlton, the wife of Sir Robert, the eminent Q.C. It was with no little elation that he passed the card round the breakfast-table for the benefit of Mrs. Browne and the girls. There stood Lady Charlton's name, engraved in the centre, and his own, "Mr. Edward Everett," written up in the left-hand corner; while the date, a Thursday in February, was as yet too far ahead for him to have any inkling of the trepidation he was presently to feel.

Everett, although nineteen, had never been to a real party before; in the wilds of Devonshire one does not even require dress clothes; therefore, after sending an acceptation in his best handwriting, his first step was to go and get himself measured for an evening suit.

Now, Everett looked even younger than his age, and this is felt to be a misfortune when one is still in one's teens. Later in life people appear to bear it much better. He found himself feeling more than usually young and insignificant on presenting himself to his tailor and stating his requirements. Mr. Lucas condescended to him from the elevation of six inches superior height and thirty years' seniority. He received Everett's orders with toleration, and re-translated them with decision. "Certainly, sir, I understand what you mean precisely. What you require is this, that, or the other;" and the young gentleman found himself meekly gathering views that never had emanated from his own bosom. Nevertheless he took the most profound interest in the building up of his suit, and constantly

invented excuses to drop in upon Mr. Lucas and see how the work was getting on.

Meanwhile, at home he, with the Browne girls, especially with Lily, the youngest, often discussed the coming "At Home." Lily wondered what Lady Charlton was like, if she had any daughters, whether there would be dancing. Everett had never seen his hostess; thought, however, he had heard there were daughters, but sincerely hoped they wouldn't dance; for, although the Browne girls had taught him to waltz, he was conscious he did them small credit as pupil.

"I'm sure it will be a splendid party!" cried Lily the enthusiastic. "How I wish some good fairy would just transport me there in the middle of the evening, so that I might have a peep at you in all your glory!"

"I wish with all my heart you were going too, Lil," said Everett; "I shan't know a soul, I'm sure." And though he spoke in an airy, matter-of-fact tone, qualms were beginning to shake his bosom as he pictured himself thus launched alone on the tide of London society.

He began to count the days which yet remained to him of happy obscurity; and as Time moves with inexorable footsteps, no matter how earnestly we would hurry or delay him, so at length there remained but a week's slender barrier between Everett and the fatal date. For while he would not acknowledge it even yet to himself, all sense of pleasurable anticipation had gradually given place to the most unmitigated condition of fright.

Thus when he awoke on the actual Monday morning preceding the party, he could not at first imagine to what cause he owed the burden of oppression which immediately descended on his breast; just so used he to feel as a boy when awaking to the consciousness of an impending visit to the dentist. Then all at once he remembered that in four days more Thursday night would have come, and his fate would be sealed.

He carried a sinking spirit to his legal studies all that day and the next, and yet was somewhat cheered on returning home on the Tuesday evening to find a parcel awaiting him from the tailor's. He experienced real pleasure in putting on the new suit after dinner and going down to exhibit himself to the girls in the drawing-room. It was delightful to listen to their exclamations and their praise; to hear Lily declare, "Oh, you do look nice, Ted! Splendacious! Doesn't it suit him well, mammy?"

In that intoxicating moment, Everett felt he could hold his own in any drawing-room in the land; nor could he help inwardly agreeing on catching sight of himself in the chimney-glass that he did look remarkably well in spite of a hairless lip and smooth young cheeks. He mentally decided to get his hair cut, buy lavender gloves and Parma violets, and casually inquire of Leslie, their "swell" man down

at old Braggart's, whether coloured silk socks were still considered "good form."

But when he donned those dress clothes for the second time, on the Thursday night itself, he didn't feel half so happy. He suffered from "fright" pains in his inside, and his fingers shook so, he spoilt a dozen cravats in the tying. He got Lily to fix him one at last, and it was she who found him a neat little cardboard box for his flowers, that his overcoat might not crush them. For, as the night was fine, and shillings scarce with him in those days, he intended walking to his destination.

Of course he was ready much too soon, and spent a restless, not to say a miserable hour in the Brownes' drawing-room, afraid of starting, yet unable to settle down to anything. Then, when half-past nine struck, seized with sudden terror lest he should be too late, he made most hasty adieux and rushed from the house. Only to hear Lily's light foot-fall immediately following him, and her little breathless cry of "Oh, Ted! you've forgotten your latch-key."

"I wish to Heaven I was going to pass the evening quietly with you, Lil!" sighed the poor youth, all his heart in his boots; but she begged him not to be a goose, told him he would meet much nicer girls, and made him promise to notice how they were all dressed, so as to describe the frocks to her next day. Then she tripped back into the house, gave him a final smile, the door closed, and there was nothing for Everett to do but set off.

He has told me since what a dreadful walk that was. He can remember it vividly across all the intervening years, and he declares that no criminal on his way to the gallows could have suffered from more agonising apprehensions. He pictured his reception in a thousand dismal forms. He saw himself knocking at the door; the moment's suspense; the servant facing him. What ought he to say? "Is Lady Charlton at home?" But that was ridiculous, since he knew she was at home; should he then walk straight in without a word? but what would the servant think? Or, supposing—awful thought!—he had made a mistake in the date; supposing this wasn't the night at all? He searched in his pockets for the card with feverish eagerness, and remembered he had left it stuck in the dining-room chimney-glass.

His forehead grew damp with sweat, his hands clammy. He slackened his speed. Why was he walking so fast? He would get there too soon: how embarrassing to be the first arrival! Then he saw by the next baker's shop it was on the stroke of ten, and terror lent him wings. How much more embarrassing to arrive the last!

The Charltons lived in Harley Street, which he had no sooner reached than he guessed that must be the house, mid-way down. For a stream of light expanded wedge-wise from the door, which was flung open as a carriage drew up to the kerbstone. Everett

calculated he should arrive precisely as the occupants were getting out. Better wait a couple of minutes.

Blessed respite! He crossed the road and loitered along in the shadow of the opposite side. He examined the house from this point of vantage. It was a blaze of light from top to bottom. The balcony on the drawing-room floor had been roofed in with striped canvas. One of the red curtains hanging from it was drawn aside; he caught glimpses of moving forms and bright colours within.

He heard the long-drawn notes of a violin. The ever-opening hall-door exhibited a brilliant interior, with numberless men-servants conspicuous upon a scarlet background. Ladies in light wraps had entered the house from the carriage, and other carriages arriving in quick succession had disgorged other lovely beings. If the door closed for one instant it sprang open the next at the sound of wheels.

"I'll walk to the top of the street," Everett determined, "cross over, and then present myself." But as he again approached with courage screwed to the sticking-place, a spruce hansom dashed up before him. Two very "masher" young men sprang out. They stood for a moment laughing together while one found the fare. The other glanced at Everett, and, as it seemed to my too sensitive young friend, with a certain amusement. "Is it possible that this little boy is coming to Lady Charlton's too?" This at least is the meaning Everett read in an eye probably devoid of any meaning at all. He felt he could not go in in the company of these gentlemen. He must wait now until they were admitted. So assuming as unconscious an air as possible he stepped through the band of gaslight, and was once more swallowed up in the friendly darkness beyond.

"I'll just walk once to the corner and back," said he; but, fresh obstacle! when he returned, a servant with powdered head swaggered on the threshold exchanging witticisms with the commissionaire keeping order outside; and the crimson carpet laid down across the pavement was fringed with loiterers at either edge, some of whom, as he drew near, turned to look at him with an expectant air.

It was a moment of exquisite suffering. Should he go in? Should he pass on? Only those (and nowadays such are rare) who have themselves gone through the agonies of shyness can appreciate the situation. As he reached the full glare of the house-light, Everett's indecision was visible in his face.

"Lady Charlton's, sir?" queried Jeames.

My poor Everett! His imbecility will scarcely be believed.

"Thanks—no—ah—er!" he stammered feebly; "I am looking for Mr. Browne's!"

Which was the first name that occurred to him, and he heard the men chuckling together as he fled. After this he walked up and down the long, accursed length of Harley Street, on the dark side of

the way, no less than seven mortal times; until, twice passing the same policeman, his sapience began to eye the wild-faced youth with disfavour. Then he made a tour, east, south, west, north, round the block in which Lady Charlton's house stands, and so came round to the door once more.

Yet it was clearly impossible to present himself there now, after his folly. It was also too late—or he thought it so. On the other hand, it was too early to go home. Mrs. Browne had said she should not expect to hear he was in before two or three. On this account he dared not return, for never, never would he confess to her the depths of his cowardice! He therefore continued street-walking with treadmill regularity, cold, hungry, and deadly dull.

But when twelve was gone on the church clocks, he could endure it no longer. He turned and slunk home. Delicately did he insert the key in the door; most mouse-like did he creep in; and yet someone heard him. Lily, with flying locks, looked over the balusters, and then ran noiselessly down to the hall.

"Oh, Teddy, I couldn't go to bed for thinking of your party and how much you must be enjoying yourself! But what is the matter? You look so—funny!"

Somehow Everett found himself telling her the whole story, and never perhaps has humiliated mortal found a kinder little comforter. Far from laughing at him, as he may have deserved, tears filled her pretty eyes at the recital of his unfortunate evening, and no amount of petting was deemed too much. She took him to the drawing-room, where she had hitherto been sitting unplaiting her hair; stirred the fire into a brighter blaze, wheeled him up the easiest couch, and, signal proof of feminine heroism, braved the kitchen beetles to get him something to eat.

What a delightful impromptu picnic she spread out upon the sofa! How capital was the cold beef and pickles, the gruyère cheese, the bottled beer! How they laughed and enjoyed themselves, always with due consideration not to disturb the sleepers above. How Everett, with the audacity born of the swing back of the pendulum, seized upon this occasion to——

But no! I did not undertake to give further developments; these must stand over to another time.

LEGEND OF AN ANCIENT MINSTER.

I.

FAIRCHESTER Abbey is noted for the mixed character of its architecture. Such a confused blending of styles is very rarely to be met with in any of our English cathedrals. There is no such thing as uniformity and no possibility of tracing out the original architect's plan; it has been so altered by later builders.

The Norman pillars of the nave still remain, but they are surmounted by a vaulted Gothic roof. The side aisles of the choir are also Norman, but this heavier work is most beautifully screened from view and completely panelled over with the light tracery of the later Perpendicular.

It is almost impossible to adequately describe the beauties of this noble choir. The architect seems to have been inspired, in the face of unusual difficulty, to preserve all that was beautiful in the work of his predecessors, and to blend it in a marvellous manner with his more perfect conceptions. There is nothing sombre or heavy about it. It is a perfect network of tall, slender pillars and gauzy tracery, and at the east end there is the finest window to be seen in this country, harmonising in the colour of its glass with the rest of the building; shedding, in the sun's rays, no gloomy, heavy colourings, but bright golden, creamy white, and even pink tints, on the receptive freestone, which, unlike marble, is not cold or forbidding, but naturally warm and pleasing to the eye.

To conclude this brief description, we can choose no better words than these: "Gloria soli Deo."

They occur on the roof of the choir at its junction with the nave, and explain the unity and harmony which exists amidst all this diversity. Each successive architect worked with this one object in view, the glory of God alone, and so he did not ruthlessly destroy, but recognised the same purpose in the work of his predecessors and endeavoured to blend all into one harmonious whole, thus leaving for future ages a lesson written in stone which churchmen of the present day would do well to learn.

Early in the year 188—, I was appointed Precentor of this cathedral, and in the course of duty was brought much in contact with Dr. F., the organist.

It was my custom frequently, after service, to join him in the organ-loft and to discuss various matters of interest connected with our own church and the outside world. He was a most charming companion; a first-rate organist and master of theory, and a man of large experience and great general culture.

One morning, soon after my appointment, I joined Dr. F. with a special purpose in view.

We had met to discuss the music for the approaching festival of Easter. The Doctor was in his shirt-sleeves, standing in the interior of the organ, covered with cobwebs and dirt, inspecting the woodwork, which was getting into a very ruinous condition, and endeavouring to replace a pipe which had fallen from its proper position so as to interfere with many of its neighbours.

"Here's a nice state of things," said he, ruefully regarding his surroundings. "If we don't have something done soon the whole organ will fall to pieces; and I am so afraid, lest in re-modelling it, the tone of these matchless diapasons will be affected. There is nothing like them anywhere in England. We must have it done soon, however; I only hope we may gain more than we lose."

It was indeed time something was done. The key-boards of the old organ were yellow and uneven with age. They reminded one of steps hollowed by the knees of pilgrims, they were so scooped out by the fingers of past generations of organists. Its stops were of all shapes and sizes, and their character was indicated by paper labels gummed underneath. It had been built about the year 1670 by Renatus Harris and, although added to on several occasions, the original work still remained. Being placed on a screen between the nave and the choir, it occupied an unrivalled position for sound.

After awhile Dr. F. succeeded in putting matters a little to rights and, seated at the key-boards, proceeded to play upon the diapasons, the tone of which he had so extolled. It would really be impossible to exaggerate the solemnity, the richness, and the indescribable sadness of the sounds which proceeded from them; one never hears anything like it in modern organs. These have their advantages and their peculiar effects, but they lack that mellowed richness of tone which seems an art belonging to the builders of the past.

Presently the Doctor ceased, and producing a roll of music told me it was a Service he was accustomed to have each Easter, and asked me to listen and say what I thought of it.

It would be impossible for me to express in words the admiration I felt on hearing it. It was a most masterly composition, and was moreover entirely original and unlike the writing of any known composer. It possessed an individuality which distinguished it from every other work of a like nature. All one could say with certainty about it was that it was not modern music. There was a simplicity and a severity about it which stamped it unmistakably as belonging to an age anterior even to Bach or Handel: modern writers employ more ornamentation and are not so restricted in their harmonies; modern art sanctions a greater liberty, a less simplicity of method, and a less rigid conformity to rule.

The movement which most impressed me was the Credo.

There was a certainty of conviction in its opening phrases pointing

to a real earnestness of purpose. It was as if the composer's faith had successfully withstood all the doubts, anxieties, and conflicts of life. It was the song of the victorious Christian who saw before him the prize for which he had long and steadfastly contended. *He believed;* he did more than that; he actually *realised.* It was the joy, not of anticipation, but of actual possession, the consciousness of the Divine life dwelling in the heart, cramped and hindered by its surroundings, but destined to develop in the light of clearer and fuller knowledge.

As the story of the Incarnation and Passion was told, there crept over the listener feelings of mingled sadness and thanksgiving: sadness at the life of suffering and pain endured "For us men and for our salvation," and thanksgiving for the Gift so freely bestowed. And then Heaven and Earth combined to tell the story of the Resurrection morning, and the strains of thankfulness and praise increased until it seemed as if the writer had at length passed from Earth to Heaven, and was face to face with the joys of the "Life Everlasting" which all the resources of his art were powerless fully to express.

The music ceased, and I awoke as from a dream.

"You need not tell me your opinion," said the Doctor; "your face shows it most unmistakably; you can form only a very faint idea of its beauties without the voice parts. When you hear our choir sing it you will say it is the most powerful sermon you have ever heard within these walls."

"Who is the composer?" I asked excitedly, my curiosity thoroughly aroused.

"My dear fellow," replied Dr. F., "before telling its history, you must see the proofs I have in my possession, for I shall have to relate one of the most remarkable stories you have ever heard. So strange indeed are the circumstances connected with that old Service that I have kept them to myself, lest people should think me an eccentric musician. Our late Dean knew part of them and witnessed some of the things I shall tell you. The story will take some little time, but if you will come across to my house you shall hear it and also see the proofs I hold in my possession."

II.

We went direct from the cathedral into the library of Dr. F.'s house, where, without wasting any time, he produced a roll of manuscript and gave it me to read.

It was tied up neatly with tape and enclosed in another sheet of paper, which bore the date January, 1862, and a note in the Doctor's handwriting stating that he had discovered it in an old chest in the cathedral library.

The document itself was yellow with age and was headed:

"Certain remarkable passages relating to the death of the late

Ebenezer Jenkins, sometime organist of this cathedral, obiit April 3, 1686; related by John Gibson, lay clerk."

Enclosed within it was also a fragment of music. Unrolling the parchment, I proceeded to decipher with difficulty this narrative.

"On the Wednesday evening before Easter, A.D. 1686, I, John Gibson, was called to the bedside of Master Jenkins.

"He had manifested a wish to hold converse with me, and to see me concerning some matters in which we had both been engaged. He had suffered grievously for many days, and it was plain to all his friends that he had not long to tarry with us. A right skilful player upon the organ was Master Jenkins, and a man beloved of all. He had written much music for the Glory of God and the edification of his Church, wherein his life seemed mirrored, for his music appealed to men's hearts and led them to serve God, as did also the example of his blameless life and conversation among us. He had been busied for some time in the writing of a Service for Easter Day, in the which he designed to express the thoughts of his waning years. I had been privileged to hear some of these sweet strains, and do affirm that finer music hath never been written by any man in this realm of England. The Italians do make much boast of their skill in music, and doubtless in their use of counterpoints, fugues, and divers other devices they have hitherto excelled our nation; but I doubt if Palestrina himself could have written more excellent music, or have devised more cunning harmonies than those of Master Jenkins.

"The work had of late been hindered by the pains of sickness, for the master's eyes were dim with age, and his hands could scarce hold pen; and so I, his most intimate friend, had on sundry occasions transcribed his thoughts as he related them.

"On receiving his message I forthwith hastened to the presence of my friend, and was sore troubled to find him in so grievous a plight. It was plain to all beholders that his course was well-nigh run, for a great change had taken place even in the last few hours.

"He revived somewhat on seeing me, and begged me at once to fetch paper and ink. 'I am going,' said he, 'to keep Easter in my Lord's Court; but ere I go, I fain would finish what hath been my life's work. Then shall I rest in peace.'

"There was but little time, and so I made haste to fetch pen and paper, and waited for his words.

"Never, I trow, hath music been written before at such a season as this. We were finishing the last movement—the Creed, and those words went direct to my heart as they had never done before. I could scarce refrain from weeping, but joy was mingled even with tears, for the light upon the master's face was not of earth, and there was a sound of triumph in his voice which told of conflict well-nigh ended and rest won.

"We had come to the words 'I believe in the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.' For the moment, strength

seemed to have returned and my pen could scarce keep pace with his thoughts, so rapid and so earnest were they. But the end was closer even than I had supposed, for just as we reached the word 'life,' the light suddenly failed from his face and he fell back. He smiled once, and whispered that word Life, and I saw that his soul had departed.

"In fulfilment of his last wishes I made diligent search for the remaining portions of this his work, but failed to find them, and can only suppose that they have been heedlessly destroyed. It would scarce have seemed right to imprint so small a fragment, and so I have deemed it wise to place it, with this narrative of its history, in the cathedral library.

"Ere I close this narrative I must record certain strange passages which came under my notice and which are vouched for by Gregory Jowett, who likewise beheld them. They happened in this wise. On the year after Master Jenkins's death, on the same date and about the same hour, we were passing through the cathedral, having come from a practice of the singers, and Master Jowett remembered some music he had left by the side of the organ. He went up the stair leading to the claviers and I remained below.

"Of a sudden he surprised me by rushing down, greatly affrighted, and affirmed that he had seen Master Jenkins sitting at the organ; whereupon I reassured him, and at length prevailed upon him to return with me. Then, indeed, did we both actually behold Master Jenkins, just as he had appeared in life, attired in somewhat sad-coloured raiment, playing upon the keys from which no sound proceeded. I was not one to be easily affrighted, and so advanced as if to greet him, when of a sudden the figure vanished.

"We do both of us affirm the truth of this marvellous relation, and do here append our joint signatures, having made solemn affirmation upon oath, in the presence of Master Simpson, attorney, of this city:

"(*Signed*) JOHN GIBSON.

"GREGORY JOWETT.

"Witnessed by me, Nicholas Simpson, Attorney-at-law, the 27th day of April, 1687."

III.

THE Doctor smiled at the perplexity which showed itself most unmistakably in my face as I laid down the manuscript.

"Are you a believer in ghosts or apparitions?" said he.

"Theoretically but not practically," I replied. "They resolve themselves, more or less, into a question of evidence; I would never believe one man's word on the subject without further proof, because it is always a fair solution of the difficulty to suppose him the victim of a delusion. There are so many cases of mysterious appearances, however, vouched for upon overwhelming evidence, that I am compelled to admit their truth, at the same time believing they would

be scientifically explainable if we understood all the laws governing this world and could more clearly distinguish between the spiritual and the material. There is one thing usually noticeable about these appearances which, to my mind, is very significant: they never actually do anything, they only appear to do it and vanish away, leaving behind them no sign of their presence."

"Are you prepared to accept that narrative as true?" said the Doctor.

"The balance of evidence compels me to accept it," I replied. "There appears to be no motive for fraud; one could, of course, invent theories to account for the apparition, but I am forced to believe, nevertheless, that two highly trustworthy men did actually imagine that they saw the organist's ghost. Whether they actually did so or not is another matter."

"Very good," replied Dr. F. "Now will you believe me if I tell you still more wonderful things which I myself have witnessed; and will you give me credit for being a perfectly reliable witness? I only ask you to believe; I, myself, cannot explain."

"My dear Doctor," I replied, "I shall receive anything you tell me with great respect, for you are a most unlikely subject to ever be the victim of a delusion."

At this the Doctor laughed and said: "Here goes, once and for ever, my reputation for practical common-sense; henceforth, I suppose, you will class me with musicians generally, who I know bear a character for eccentricity. I will tell the tale, however, and you shall see I possess proofs of its being no delusion, and can contradict your assertion that ghosts never leave behind them traces of their presence.

"I put the old manuscript aside, intending, at some future time, to have the Credo sung as a fragment. It would have been presumption on my part to have completed the Service, so I left it, and being much occupied, forgot all about it. Just about this time we decided to do away with manual labour in blowing the organ, and substituted a small hydraulic engine. I mention this because it has a bearing on what follows.

"To be as brief as possible. Just before Easter I was called away suddenly on business for a day, and, on returning, was surprised at receiving a visit from the Dean. He appeared annoyed, and complained that his rest had been broken the previous night by someone playing the organ quite into the small hours. He was surprised beyond measure on my informing him of my absence from home. We tried to discover a solution to the mystery, but failed. One day, however, I showed the Dean the old manuscript in my possession, and was surprised to hear that he knew of a tradition of the appearance, once a year, of the apparition. An old verger, since dead, had declared several times that he had seen it; but, being old and childish, no one took any notice of the story.

"Strange to say, the date when the ghost appeared was always the ame — the Wednesday before Easter. That was also the date ientioned in the manuscript, and also the date when the organ was eard by the Dean. We considered these facts of sufficient import- nce to warrant our making further investigation; and decided, when ie time came round again, to go ourselves into the cathedral; mean- hile we kept our own counsel.

"The time soon passed on and the week before Easter again arrived, nd on the Wednesday evening, about 11.45, we entered the cathedral y the transept door. The moon shone brightly and we easily found ur way into the nave; and sitting down, awaited the development f events. The shadows cast by the moonlight were very weird and hostly in their effect; and had we been at all impressionable, we hould doubtless have wished ourselves back again. After re- iaining some time, however, we came to the conclusion that we had ome upon a foolish errand, and had just risen to go, when an xquisite strain of very soft music came from the organ. We listened pell-bound, rooted to the spot. The theme was simple, almost regorian in its character, but handled in a most masterly way. Such laying I had never before heard; it was the very perfection of style.

"We were listening evidently to what was an opening prelude, for everal different subjects were introduced and only partially worked out.

"Several times I fancied a resemblance to the old Credo, and once istinctly caught a well-known phrase; my doubts were soon solved, owever, for in a few moments we heard it in its entirety.

"You know how difficult it is to put one's impressions of music into ords; language never fully expresses them. Music can be easily escribed in dry technical language, the language which deals in 'dis- ords and their resolutions,' but that does not express its influence pon ourselves. No language can do that, for it is an attempt to ithom the infinite.

"As the varied harmonies echoed through the vaulted nave, flooding with a perfect sea of melody, it appeared as if we were listening to ie story of a man's life.

"There were the uncertain strains of youth, the shadowing forth of ague possibilities, the expression of hope undimmed by disappoint- ient. A nameless undefined longing for greater liberty. The esire to be free from the restraints of home, and to mingle with the usy world in all the pride of early manhood. Soon the voyager uts off from the shore, and at first all seems smooth and alluring. [e drifts along the ocean of life, wafted by favourable winds, elighting in each new pleasure. But storm soon succeeds calm, as ight follows day, and the young man is soon encompassed with the orrows and temptations of this life, battling against evil habits, ruggling to keep himself unspotted from the world.

'Bella premunt hostilia
Da robur, fer auxilium.'

"Youth passes on to middle age, there is now an earnestness of purpose which at first was lacking. Material pleasures are losing their hold, there are traces of another holy influence: two lives are joined in happy union, leading and encouraging each other to high and noble thoughts and actions. A sound of thankfulness and praise is heard, to be followed only too soon by the strain which tells of mourning and heaviness: one was taken, the other left to toil on alone. But still there was a purpose in life, a work to be done, something to live for. And with lamentation is blended hope.

"The years roll on and the spiritual more and more overshadows the material. The little spark of the Divine life dwelling in the heart has developed and permeated the whole being. The soul seems chained and hampered by its surroundings. Like a bird it beats itself against its prison walls, until at length it wings its way heavenward.

"And then that ancient hymn, which before had wedded itself in my imagination to the music, pealed forth in all its grandeur, and I seemed to hear the songs of men united to the purer strains of angelic music:

'Uni trinoque Domino
Sit sempiterna gloria
Qui vitam sine termino
Nobis donet in patria.'

"The music ceased and we awoke as from a dream, and, remembering why we had come, rushed up to the organ loft, only to find it in perfect darkness."

IV.

In relating his experience in the cathedral, and in attempting to describe the music he had heard, Dr. F. grew excited and even dramatic, and his voice had quite a ring of triumph in it as he recited the "O Salutaris"—to my mind, the grandest of all the old Latin hymns, lost for many years to our Church, but at length restored in our native tongue.

He paused for a few moments to recover himself and then continued.

"On the morrow I resolved, if possible, to write from memory the complete Service as we had heard it. During the day, being much occupied, I was only able to jot down phrases which recurred to my memory. The principal themes were well impressed upon my mind, and, although my treatment of them was sure to differ in many ways from the original, I felt more justified than formerly in attempting what seemed rather a piece of presumption.

"After a fairly early dinner I settled down in my study about 6.30 p.m., determined to work right on until my task was finished.

"My success did not please me. Several times I rose and tried the score over upon the piano. There was no doubt about it, the main

ideas were there, but still there was everything lacking. The whole affair was weak, unworthy of my own reputation, and doubly unworthy of the great writer who had written the Credo. Time after time I studied that fragment, and strove to find out what it was that gave it such vigour and force, but it was useless. That was undoubtedly the work of a great genius, and everything I had written was nothing short of a libel upon myself, strung together so as to be quite correct in harmony and counterpoint, but full, nevertheless, of nothing but commonplaces.

"In thorough disgust I gave it up altogether, when suddenly I remembered there was no Kyrie in the Service we had heard.

"A something prompted me to supply the want out of my own mind. All I strove was to make the style blend with the Credo; in every other respect it was perfectly original, and when finished gave me great cause to be pleased with my own work.

"Looking at my watch I discovered it was fast getting on to midnight, so I drew an arm-chair up to the fire and lighted a cigar. It was only natural that my mind should be full of the music heard the previous evening. I was no believer in the supernatural, and had unsparingly ridiculed all ghost stories heard at various times. Now here was no doubt: I had listened to music played by no earthly fingers. What could it all mean? Why did the old man's ghost return to haunt the scene of his former labours? Was it because he had left a solemn injunction which had never been complied with? Was it because his life's purpose had been left unfulfilled, and his last cherished wish had died with him?

"There was the solution, no doubt. And what a loss it was to the world; only to think of so priceless a work being lost for ever!

"At this stage I was conscious of nodding, and waking up with a start, endeavoured to pursue my train of thought. The fire was comfortable, and my cigar was still alight; only a few moments more, and then bed. The resolution was scarcely formed before my head dropped again and I was fast asleep.

"How long I slept I know not; a sensation of coldness caused me to awake,-only to find the fire nearly out, my reading-lamp smouldering, and the moon brightly shining into the room. Imagine, if you can, my surprise, when, turning round, there, full in the light of the moon, was a figure writing at my table. It was an old man dressed in old-fashioned style, just like what was worn two hundred or more years ago. There was the wig, the coat with square flaps, the shoes with silver buckles—everything except the sword. The face could not be clearly defined, but the figure was most distinct.

"My first sensations were, to say the least, peculiar. I was for the moment frightened, and it was several moments before common sense asserted itself. A feeling of intense curiosity soon overpowered the sense of fear. Sitting in my chair I could hear the scratching of his pen upon the paper. He wrote at a very rapid pace and seemed too

intent upon his labours to notice my presence. I waited for some time in absolute stillness, but then, becoming weary of the situation, endeavoured to attract his attention with a cough. He took no notice, and so I arose and walked towards him.

"I am telling you the entire truth when I assure you I could find nothing in that chair. I grasped nothing tangible, and the chair appeared quite empty, while still the scratching of the pen continued; and as I walked away from the window the apparition appeared as plain as ever. Every line of the figure was clear as if in life. At last while I watched, the sound of writing ceased, and the figure vanished from my view, leaving the roll of manuscript just as it had been before I fell asleep.

"Rushing up to the mantelpiece I seized a box of matches, hurriedly lighted a candle, and approached the desk, and there found the Service written out in full in a strange handwriting. My own work was obliterated, the pen drawn through it all with the exception of the Kyrie, which was as I left it, save that the word Kyrie was written over it in the strange handwriting. At the conclusion of the Service were written these words: 'E. I. hoc fecit. R. I. P.'"

As the Doctor uttered these words, he went to the bookshelf and drew down a book bound carefully in calf, which he opened and passed to me. It was the original copy as he had found it, his own work crossed out just as he had said, and the Service written in an altogether strange hand.

"I took those letters, R. I. P., to impose a solemn obligation upon me," continued the Doctor. "The Service was at length restored, and I felt sure that if it were used his soul would rest in peace. That is why we have it here every Easter Sunday. It has become, in fact, quite a tradition of the cathedral, which I hope no future organist will ever depart from. The apparition has never since appeared, so I take it that was evidently the wish expressed, and the reason why the old man's ghost for so many years haunted the scene of his former labours."

This story is finished. I leave it just as the Doctor related it. Do I believe it? Undoubtedly I do, but all explanation I leave as impossible. Perhaps some day we shall know better the relation existing between the material world and the unknown. At present the subject is best left alone. Facts we must accept, our imperfect knowledge prevents their explanation.

JOHN GRÆME.

THE ONLY SON OF HIS MOTHER.

By Letitia McClintock.

"DEAR MRS. ARCHER, be consoled; I promise to stand by Henry as if he were my brother. Indeed, I look upon him quite as my brother, having no near ties of my own."

"God bless you for the promise," said Mrs. Archer. "You are better to Henry than any brother could be. Thy love is wonderful, passing the love of woman."

Mrs. Archer, the widowed mother of an only child, was deeply imbued with sacred lore. No great reader of general literature, she knew her Bible from cover to cover, and was much in the habit of expressing herself in Scriptural language. Her husband had been the Rector of a lonely parish in Donegal, where for twenty-five years he had taught an unsophisticated people, "letting his light shine," as his wife expressed it.

One recreation he had: the writing of a Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. While he was shut up in his study, little Henry, a mischievous, wild urchin, had to be kept quiet. Here was field for the full exercise of Mrs. Archer's ingenuity. As the boy's life went on, she gained an able assistant in this loving labour, namely Malcolm McGregor, Henry's school-friend. Malcolm and Henry were sent to Foyle College at the same time. Mrs. Archer could hardly read for joy the day she expected her darling home for his first vacation, accompanied by "the jolliest chap in the school," whom he had begged leave to bring with him.

From the Rectory door the parents could watch the outside car coming down the steep hill; King William, the Rector's old horse, slipping a little, and two shabby, hair-covered trunks falling on his back, to be recovered by Jack Dunn, the man-of-all-work, who could drive on occasion.

Which of the little black figures running on in front of the car was the mother's treasure? Henry was up to as many pranks as ever, but now he had a quiet friend to restrain him, and his mother and the parish were very glad of it.

"Dear mistress, thon's a settled wee fellow, thon McGregor: he's the quare wise guide for we'er ain wichel." Thus spoke Jack Dunn when the holidays drew near an end. "Fleech him to come back."

"There is no need to urge him, Jack," replied his mistress, smiling; "he is very anxious to visit us again."

"Weel-a-weel, ma'am, I never tould you how Master Henry blew up the sexton wi' his crackers, twa nights afore he went to school——"

"Never, Jack!"

"Na, na! Jack wadna be for vexin' you an' his reverence. Master Henry an' Mat, the herd, let off fireworks outside the sexton's door, an' him an' the wife, an' the sisters an' the grannie jumpin' out o' their beds, an' runnin' about the house, thinkin' the Judgment Day was come, an' maybe that the Old Enemy was come for them——"

"Oh, Jack, hush; how terrible! Think what you are saying."

"Nae word o' lie, mistress. The sexton was in a quare rage, an' the grannie lay for three weeks wi' the scare. It was hushed up becase there isna a soul in the parish wad like to annoy his reverence. But whist —not a word out o' your mouth! Our wean has got thon ither wee comrade to steady him *now*."

McGregor did steady Henry. They fished Gartan Lough; they boated, they shot over the mountains, they skated on the same lovely expanse of lake, and they heard, in the marshes each Easter the whirring bleat of the snipe. This was the history of school and college vacations for many years. Then first love came—society was sought for; the neighbouring clergy and their families came to Gartan Rectory; young couples wandered blissfully in the fairest scenes in all the world. The friends loved the same sweet maiden, and she deceived them both, and married a ponderous rector, possessed of six hundred per annum, the very year they left old Trinity! They were firmer friends than ever, yet that sweet false one was never mentioned between them. In a reverently-veiled corner in each heart, however, still dwelt a dear ideal which the false beloved had not been able to destroy.

Then events crowded upon Mrs. Archer. The Rector died, and she left her old home; and her son and his friend went into the army, Henry as sub., Malcolm as surgeon.

At the commencement of the story, Malcolm was assuring the mother that he would stand by Henry in all dangers—under all circumstances whatever.

"You will hear of the 5th Fusiliers favourably, I am sure," said he lightly, trying to calm her agitation.

"Henry is so rash and ardent," she returned.

"And I am a cool, quiet fellow, ma'am. Oh, you may trust me—I'll have an eye to him."

"Will there be wars, Doctor dear, where you ones is goin'?" asked old Jack Dunn, wistfully, as he polished the young gentlemen's boots for the last time before their departure. The friends were smoking a last pipe by the kitchen fire of the cottage where Mrs. Archer lived in her husband's old parish, among the people who had loved him. Jack was polishing the boots close to them, pausing every now and then to exchange a word with his "wichel," whom he had nursed as an infant, petted and scolded as a schoolboy, and shielded from punishment on innumerable occasions. His "wichel" was now a huge young man, taller than Dr. McGregor by four inches.

"Wha'll black them boots now?" said Jack in a sentimental tone. "Wha'll put the richt polish on them? Some scatter-brained youngster, I'm thinkin', that shouldna be trusted to handle boots like these anes." Thus he spoke, making the hissing, purring noise with which he accompanied his rubbing down of King William.

The friends smiled at each other. "That's hard work, Jack," remarked Henry.

"But are ye goin' to the wars, my wean? Doctor dear, tell me, will he be fightin' them savage Indians?"

"We believe so, Jack. We are to join the 5th Fusiliers, and they are to fight the warlike Hill Tribes, fine soldiers—tall, fine men they are, we are told."

"Alase-a-nie! You'll nae be fightin' yoursel, Doctor?"

"No," smiled McGregor, "my duty will be to cure, not to kill."

"Then, man alive, ye'll hae an eye to Henry."

So the young men tore themselves away from the sobbing mother, and, through her blinding tears, she watched them mount the steep road leading to Letterkenny first and then to the outside world, where danger must be faced and glory won. Her husband's loving people collected that evening in her cottage garden to condole with her and offer their roughly-expressed but heartfelt sympathy.

"Dinna be cryin' that way, mistress dear," said old Jack. "Sure thon's a quare steady fellow, thon Doctor, an' he will hae an eye to Henry."

It was November, 1888, when our troops were obliged to retreat from the Black Mountain, and Mrs. Archer's son and his friend were among them. Need it be recorded here how bravely Englishmen had fought, how unmurmuringly they had endured the extremity of cold and fatigue? Their Gourka allies had stood by them well; but the wild Hill Tribes, the "fine soldiers" of whom McGregor had told Jack Dunn, were getting the best of it, and we were forced to retreat. Many months had passed since the two friends first saw the Black Mountain, compared with which the mightiest highland in wild Donegal, land of mountains, was an anthill. Dear Gartan Lough was as a drop of water in their eyes, their snipe-haunted marshes as a potato garden, when they saw the gigantic scale of Indian scenery. Henry had fought well in many a skirmish and had escaped without a wound. Malcolm had used his surgical skill pretty often, generally with good effect. He was beloved by officers and men for his kindness of heart. Was there a letter to be written for any poor fellow—a last message to be sent home, words of Christian hope to be spoken, Dr. McGregor was called upon.

On the 4th of November, the first column began the retreat, the enemy "sniping," as usual, and a party had to be sent out to clear the flank, before the troops left camp. The retiring column then got carefully along the Chaila Ridge as far as the Ghoraphir Point,

where some of the 5th Fusiliers were placed with a battery of guns, and ordered to remain until all were passed. The enemy, in force, followed the last regiment and were steadily shelled from the battery. The guns were then sent down and the men, firing volleys, followed the guns, only two companies being left. Of these, Lieutenant Archer and ten men were told to stay as the last band to cover the retreat, and the enemy made a determined attempt to annihilate them. McGregor was with Henry and his ten. All the pluck that ever animated hero inspired those twelve men. Each felt the honour of being chosen for such a post. No time for words; no time for more thoughts than one, namely, "England expects every man to do his duty."

But of course Malcolm McGregor had a thought underlying the thought of duty to Queen and country; he remembered his promise to the widowed mother: he must "have an eye to Henry!"

The path that led down the hill was a most difficult one, being winding and very rocky. Above the soldiers rose a precipice, manned by parties of the enemy, who harassed them incessantly by throwing fragments of rock down upon their heads. These immense stones were hurled from a height of fifty yards; but the companies wound round the mountain in good order.

Last of all came Henry Archer and his ten men, attended by the Doctor. Theirs was the chief post of honour and of peril. Henry's foot slipped; he tried to recover himself, but in vain. Down he rolled with the loose stones that had been hurled from above. McGregor stopped, and two of the men with him; the other eight men pushed forward. Henry's leg was broken; he could not move. Here was, indeed, an anxious dilemma.

"We must carry him, of course," said the surgeon. "You are the best man of us three, Henderson; we'll hoist him on your back."

To stagger along such a path, bearing a heavy burden, was well-nigh impossible, even for the stalwart soldier. Dark faces might have been seen looking over the ridge, had they glanced upwards. They knew of the presence of these foes by the falling of the rocks about their ears. The peril of the situation demoralised the second soldier; he picked up his rifle, which he had laid on the ground while he helped the surgeon to lift Henry upon Henderson's back, and ran.

"Oh, Doctor dear, he's too weighty for me," groaned Henderson. "I canna carry him anither foot o' the way; sure, sure he's the biggest man in the regiment."

"Lay me down, Henderson, and save yourself; why should I sacrifice *you?*" groaned the wounded man.

"I'll take him from you, man; quick, quick, help me to get him on my back."

"Why, Doctor, he's a bigger man nor you," said Henderson in his Ulster dialect.

"No matter. I'll carry him or die! He has fainted. He is a dead weight now—but we leave this road together, or we stay here together." Muttering the last words, Malcolm set out, and he carried him safely over very rough ground, under a heavy shower of bullets and rockets, for one hundred and fifty yards to where the nine men awaited them.

Malcolm's strength was now gone; but Henderson had recovered his powers a little, and joining hands with him, they managed to carry Henry on to the spot where the last company of the Fusiliers and a company of Gourkas were forming, a sharp fire being kept up all the time on both sides.

Neither of them expected to reach the company, as they told one another in after days. Their sole expectation was to drop with their burden on the stony path of Ghoraphir, and leave their bones among the wild hill tribes.

"McGregor, you have carried Archer all the way?—Incredible!" cried his brother officers.

"Not I alone—Henderson helped. Let us improvise some kind of stretcher, and get him on with us, men, for Heaven's sake."

A stretcher was obtained, and he was carried on, while the retreat continued, the two companies alternately firing to keep back the enemy, who pursued for three miles.

Henry lay helpless in a bare room in the fort—a blessed haven of refuge for the sick and wounded. Dr. McGregor had invalids in every room; his whole time was occupied, and his ingenuity was taxed to make the poor fellows somewhat comfortable.

"Another death, Doctor," said the officer in command one morning.

"Indeed, yes; it is that brave chap, Henderson, who helped me to bring Archer in. Bronchitis has carried him off; a man of fine physique; a fine young fellow, and a countryman of my own. The cold of this mountain district is fearful. I can't keep my patients warm enough, all I can do."

"How is Archer? Will he pull through?"

"He is low to-day; but the limb is doing all right. There is more fever than I like to see," and the surgeon, looking very grave, hurried away.

Not to neglect any duty, and yet to nurse his comrade as he ought to be nursed was the problem our Jonathan had to solve.

Henry's fever ran high for several days, leaving him utterly weak. It was midnight. The patient and his surgeon were alone; the latter beginning to cherish a feeble hope, the former believing that he had done with earthly things.

"You carried me on your back down Ghoraphir, old fellow," he said faintly, stretching out a hand and arm that were dried up to skin and bone.

"What of that, Henry? Keep quiet, I'd advise you."

"You took off your tunic and laid it over me on the stretcher. Henderson told me that; and you might have caught your death of cold——"

"Hush, my good man; you are talking too much."

"You doctors are all tyrants. I *will* speak, for I may not be able again. Reach me that writing-case. Yes. Open it and take out the things. The Bible—her own Bible—is for the mater, with my love. My meerschaum is for Jack Dunn; and please tell them both that you looked after me—you 'had an eye to Henry.'"

This with a smile. Then, as Malcolm took a photograph out of the case—"Ah, you did not know I had it? Emmie gave it me that time when she—well, well, they put a pressure upon her, and I had nothing to marry on—a pauper, eh?"

"She liked you the best of us two, Henry."

"Ay, but she did not like me well enough. I dreamt of her yesterday, and I quite forgive her. If you care to keep that photo., you can, and the case, and gold pen and studs."

"Now, my chap, you just drink this, and hold your tongue. Please God, you and I will *both* see Gartan parish again; and you may tell mother and Jack that I stood by you and looked after you, if you please. You're mad angry with me this minute; but I'm shutting you up for your good."

A time came, through the mercy of God, when the widow received her son back again, with the friend who was now almost as dear to her, and when tar barrels blazed on every hill around Gartan Lough.

Jack polished the boots that had travelled so far, the while tales of adventure delighted his ear.

Henry talked the most, his quiet friend hearing him with pleasure. Surgeon McGregor never realised that he was a hero; yet his deeds were bruited abroad and became the talk of all that countryside.

"BEHOLD!"

THE ARGOSY.

APRIL, 1891.

THE FATE OF THE HARA DIAMOND.

CHAPTER XIV.

DRASHKIL-SMOKING.

"IT must and shall be mine!"

So spoke Captain Ducie on the spur of the moment as he wrote the last word of his translation of M. Platzoff's MS. And yet there was a keen sense of disappointment working within him. His blood had been at fever heat during the latter part of his task. Each fresh sentence of the cryptogram as he began to decipher it would, he hoped, before he reached the end of it, reveal to him the hiding-place of the great Diamond. Up to the very last sentence he had thus fondly deluded himself, only to find that the abrupt ending of the MS. left him still on the brink of the secret, and left him there without any clue by which he could advance a single step beyond that point. He was terribly disappointed, and the longer he brooded over the case the more entirely hopeless was the aspect it put on.

But there was an elasticity of mind about Captain Ducie that would not allow him to despair utterly for any length of time. In the course of a few days, as he began to recover from his first chagrin, he at the same time began to turn the affair of the Diamond over and over in his mind, now in one way, now in another, looking at it in this light and in that; trying to find the first faint indications of a clue which, judiciously followed up, might conduct him step by step to the heart of the mystery. Two questions naturally offered themselves for solution. First: Did Platzoff habitually carry the Diamond about his person? Second: Was it kept in some skilfully-devised hiding-place about the house? These were questions that could be answered only by time and observation.

So Captain Ducie went about Bon Repos like a man with half-a-dozen pairs of eyes, seeing, and not only seeing but noting, a hundred little things such as would never have been observed by him under ordinary circumstances. But when, at the end of a week, he

came to sum up and classify his observations, and to consider what bearing they had upon the great mystery of the hiding-place of the Diamond, he found that they had no bearing upon it whatever; that for anything seen or heard by him the world might hold no such precious gem, and the Russian's letter to Signor Lampini might be nothing more than an elaborate hoax.

When the access of chagrin caused by the recognition of this fact had in some degree subsided, Ducie was ready enough to ridicule his own foolish expectations. "Platzoff has had the Diamond in his possession for years. For him there is nothing of novelty in such a fact. Yet here have I been foolish enough to expect that in the course of one short week I should discover by some sign or token the spot where it is hidden, and that too after I knew from his own confession that the secret was one which he guarded most jealously I might be here for five years and be not one whit wiser at the end of that time as regards the hiding-place of the Diamond than I am now. From this day I give up the affair as a bad job."

Nevertheless, he did not quite do that. He kept up his habit of seeing and noting little things, but without any definite views as to any ulterior benefit that might accrue to him therefrom. Perhaps there was some vague idea floating in his mind that Fortune, who had served him so many kind turns in years gone by, might befriend him once again in this matter—might point out to him the wished-for clue, and indicate by what means he could secure the Diamond for his own

The magnitude of the temptation dazzled him. Captain Ducie would not have picked your pocket, or have stolen your watch, or your horse, or the title-deeds of your property. He had never put another man's name to a bill instead of his own. You might have made him trustee for your widow or children, and have felt sure that their interests would have been scrupulously respected at his hands Yet with all this—strange contradiction as it may seem—if he could have laid surreptitious fingers on M. Platzoff's Diamond, that gentleman would certainly never have seen his cherished gem again But had Platzoff placed it in his hands and said, "Take this to London for me and deposit it at my bankers'," the commission would have been faithfully fulfilled. It seemed as if the element of mystery, of deliberate concealment, made all the difference in Captain Ducie's unspoken estimate of the case. Besides, would there not be something princely in such a theft? You cannot put a man who steals a diamond worth a hundred and fifty thousand pounds in the category of common thieves. Such an act verges on the sublime.

One of the things seen and noticed by Captain Ducie was the absence, through illness, of the mulatto, Cleon, from his duties, and the substitution in his place of a man whom Ducie had never seen before. This stranger was both clever and obliging, and Platzoff himself confessed that the fellow made such a good substitute that

he missed Cleon less than he at first feared he should have done. He was indeed very assiduous, and found time to do many odd jobs for Captain Ducie, who contracted quite a liking for him.

Between Ducie and Cleon there existed one of those blind unreasoning hatreds which spring up full-armed and murderous at first sight. Such enmities are not the less deadly because they sometimes find no relief in words. Cleon treated Ducie with as much outward respect and courtesy as he did any other of his master's guests; no private communication ever passed between the two, and yet each understood the other's feelings towards him, and both of them were wise enough to keep as far apart as possible. Neither of them dreamed at that time of the strange fruit which their mutual enmity was to bear in time to come. Meanwhile, Cleon lay sick in his own room, and Captain Ducie was rather gladdened thereby.

M. Platzoff rarely touched cigar or pipe till after dinner; but, whatever company he might have, when that meal was over, it was his invariable custom to retire for an hour or two to the room consecrated to the uses of the Great Herb, and his guests seldom or never declined to accompany him. To Captain Ducie, as an inveterate smoker, these *séances* were very pleasant.

On the very first evening of the Captain's arrival at Bon Repos, M. Platzoff had intimated that he was an opium smoker, and that at no very distant date he would enlighten Ducie as to the practice in question. About a week later, as they sat down to their pipes and coffee, said Platzoff, "This is one of my big smoke-nights. To-night I go on a journey of discovery into Dreamland—a country that no explorations can exhaust, where beggars are the equals of kings, and where the Fates that control our actions are touched with a fine eccentricity that in a more commonplace world would be termed madness. But there nothing is commonplace."

"You are going to smoke opium?" said Ducie, interrogatively.

"I am going to smoke drashkil. Let me, for this once, persuade you to follow my example."

"For this once I would rather be excused," said Ducie, laughingly.

Platzoff shrugged his shoulders. "I offer to open for you the golden gates of a land full of more strange and wondrous things than were ever dreamed of by any early voyager as being in that new world on whose discovery he was bent; I offer to open up for you a set of experiences so utterly fresh and startling that your matter-of-fact English intellect cannot even conceive of such things. I offer you all this, and you laugh me down with an air of superiority, as though I were about to present you with something which, however precious it might be in my eyes, in yours was utterly without value."

"If I sin at all," said Ducie, "it is through ignorance. The subject is one respecting which I know next to nothing. But I must confess that about experiences such as you speak of there is

intangibility—a want of substance—that to me would make them seem singularly valueless."

"And is not the thing we call life one tissue of intangibilities?" asked the Russian. "You can touch neither the beginning nor the end of it. Do not its most cherished pleasures fly you even as you are in the very act of trying to grasp them? Do you know for certain that you—you yourself—are really here?—that you do not merely dream that you are here? What do you know?"

"Your theories are too far-fetched for me," said Ducie. "A dream can be nothing more than itself—nothing can give it backbone or substance. To me such things are of no more value than the shadow I cast behind me when I walk in the sun."

"And yet without substance there could be no shadow," snarled the Russian.

"Do your experiences in any way resemble those recorded by De Quincey?"

"They do and do not," answered Platzoff. "I can often trace, or fancy that I can, a slight connecting likeness, arising probably from the fact that in the case of both of us a similar, or nearly similar, agent was employed for a similar purpose. But, as a rule, the intellectual difference between any two men is sufficient to render their experiences in this respect utterly dissimilar."

"It does not follow, I presume, that all the visions induced by the imbibing of opium, or what you term drashkil, are pleasant ones?"

"By no means. You cannot have forgotten what De Quincey has to say on that score. But whether they are pleasant or the contrary, I accept them as so much experience, and in so far I am satisfied. You look incredulous, but I tell you, sir, that what I see, and what I undergo—subjectively—while under the influence of drashkil make up for me an experience as real, that dwells as vividly in my memory and that can be brought to mind like any other set of recollections, as if it were built up brick by brick, fact by fact, out of the incidents of everyday life. And all such experiences are valuable in this wise that whatever I see while under the influence of drashkil I see, as it were, with the eyes of genius. I breathe a keener atmosphere; I have finer intuitions; the brain is no longer clogged with that part of me which is mortal; in whatever imaginary scenes I assist, whether actor or spectator, matters not; I seem to discern the underlying meaning of things—I hear the low faint beating of the hidden pulse of the world. To come back from this enchanted realm to the dull realities of everyday life is like depriving some hero of fairy land of his magic gifts and reducing him to the level of common humanity."

"At which pleasant level I pray ever to be kept," said Ducie; "I have no desire to soar into those regions of romance where you seem so thoroughly at home."

"So be it," said Platzoff drily. "The intellects of you English have been nourished on beef and beer for so many generations that there is no such thing as spiritual insight left among you. We must not expect too much." This was said not ill-naturedly, but in that quiet jeering tone which was almost habitual with Platzoff.

Ducie maintained a judicious silence and went on puffing gravely at his meerschaum. Platzoff touched the gong and Cleon entered, for this conversation took place before the illness of the latter. The Russian held up two fingers, and Cleon bowed. Then Cleon opened a mahogany box in one corner of the room, and took out of it a pipe-bowl of red clay, into which he fitted a flexible tube five or six yards in length and tipped with amber. The bowl was then fixed into a stand of black oak about a foot high and there held securely, and the mouthpiece handed to Platzoff. Cleon next opened an inlaid box, and by means of a tiny silver spatula he cut out a small block of some black, greasy-looking mixture, which he proceeded to fit into the bowl of the pipe. On the top of this he sprinkled a little aromatic Turkish tobacco, and then applied an allumette. When he saw that the pipe was fairly alight, he bowed and withdrew.

While these preparations were going on Platzoff had not been silent. "I have spoken to you of what I am about to smoke, both as opium and drashkil," he said. "It is not by any means pure opium. With that great drug are mixed two or three others that modify and influence the chief ingredient materially. I had the secret of the preparation from a Hindoo gentleman while I was in India. It was imparted to me as an immense favour, it being a secret even there. The enthusiastic terms in which he spoke of it have been fully justified by the result, as you would discover for yourself if you could only be persuaded to try it. You shake your head. Eh bien! mon ami; the loss is yours, not mine."

"Some of what you have termed your 'experiences' are no doubt very singular ones?" said Ducie, interrogatively.

"They are—very singular," answered Platzoff. "In my last drashkil-dream, for instance, I believed myself to be an Indian fakir, and I seemed to realise to the full the strange life of one of those strange beings. I was stationed in the shade of a large tree just without the gate of some great city where all who came and went could see me. On the ground, a little way in front of me, was a wooden bowl for the reception of the offerings of the charitable. I had kept both my hands close shut for so many years that the nails had grown into the flesh, and the muscles had hardened so that I could no longer open them; and I was looked upon as a very holy man. The words of the passers-by were sweet in my ears, but I never spoke to them in return. Silent and immovable, I stood there through the livelong day—and in my vision it was always day. I had the power of looking back, and I knew that, in the first instance, I had been led by religious enthusiasm to adopt that mode of life. I

should be in the world but not of it; I should have more time for that introspective contemplation the aim and end of which is mental absorption in the divine Brahma; besides which, people would praise me, and all the world would know that I was a holy man. But the strangest part of the affair remains to be told. In the eyes of the people I had grown in sanctity from year to year; but in my own heart I knew that instead of approaching nearer to Brahma, I was becoming more depraved, more wicked, with a great inward wickedness, as time went on. I struggled desperately against the slough of sin that was slowly creeping over me, but in vain. It seemed to me as if the choice were given me either to renounce my life of outward-seeming sanctity, and becoming as other men were, to feel again that inward peace which had been mine long years before; or else, while remaining holy in the eyes of the multitude, to feel myself sinking into a bottomless pit of wickedness from which I could never more hope to emerge. My mental tortures while this struggle was going on I can never forget: they are as much a real experience to me as if they had made up a part of my genuine waking life. And still I stood with closed hands in the shade of the tree; and the people cried out that I was holy, and placed their offerings in my bowl; and I could not make up my mind to abnegate the title they gave me and become as they were. And still I grew in inward wickedness, till I loathed myself as if I were some vile reptile; and so the struggle went on, and was still going on when I opened my eyes and found myself again at Bon Repos."

As Platzoff ceased speaking, Cleon applied the light, and Ducie in his eagerness drew a little nearer. Platzoff was dressed à la Turk, and sat with cross legs on the low divan that ran round the room. Slowly and deliberately he inhaled the smoke from his pipe, expelling it a moment later, in part through his nostrils and in part through his lips. The layer of tobacco at the top of the bowl was quickly burnt to ashes. By this time the drug below was fairly alight, and before long a thick white sickly smoke began to ascend in rings and graceful spires towards the roof of the room. Cleon was gone, and a solemn silence was maintained by both the men. Platzoff's eyes, black and piercing, were fixed on vacancy; they seemed to be gazing on some picture visible to himself alone. Ducie was careful not to disturb him. His inhalations were slow, gentle and regular. After a time, a thin film or glaze began to gather over his wide-open eyes, dimming their brightness, and making them seem like the eyes of someone dead. His complexion became livid, his face more cadaverous than it naturally was. Then his eyes closed slowly and gently, like those of an infant dropping to sleep. For a little time longer he kept on inhaling the smoke, but every minute the inhalations became fainter and fewer in number. At length the hand that held the pipe dropped nervelessly by his side, the amber mouthpiece slipped from between his lips, his jaw dropped, and, with an almost imperceptible

sigh, his head sank softly back on to the cushions behind, and M. Paul Platzoff was in the opium-eater's paradise.

Ducie, who had never seen anyone similarly affected, was frightened by his host's death-like appearance. He was doubtful whether Platzoff had not been seized with a fit. In order to satisfy himself he touched the gong and summoned Cleon. That incomparable domestic glided in, noiseless as a shadow.

"Does your master always look as he does now after he has been smoking opium?" asked the Captain.

"Always, sir."

"And how long does it take him to come round?"

"That depends, sir, on the strength of the dose he has been smoking. The preparation is made of different strengths to suit him at different times; but always when he has been smoking drashkil I leave him undisturbed till midnight. If by that time he has not come round naturally and of his own accord, I carry him to bed and then administer to him a certain draught, which has the effect of sending him into a natural and healthy sleep, from which he awakes next morning thoroughly refreshed."

"Then you will come to-night at twelve, and see how your master is by that time?" said Ducie.

"It is part of my duty to do so," answered Cleon.

"Then I will wait here till that time," said the Captain. Cleon bowed and disappeared.

So Ducie kept watch and ward for four hours, during the whole of which time Platzoff lay, except for his breathing, like one dead. As the last stroke of midnight struck Cleon reappeared. His master showed not the slightest symptom of returning consciousness. Having examined him narrowly for a moment or two, he turned to Ducie.

"You must pardon me, sir, for leaving you alone," he said, "but I must now take my master off to bed. He will scarcely wake up for conversation to-night."

"Proceed as though I were not here," said Ducie. "I will just finish this weed, and then I too will turn in."

Platzoff's private rooms, forming a suite four in number, were on the ground floor of Bon Repos. From the main corridor the first that you entered was the smoking-room already described. Next to that was the dressing-room, from which you passed into the bed-room. The last of the four was a small square room, fitted up with book-shelves, and used as a private library and study.

Cleon, who was a strong, muscular fellow, lifted Platzoff's shrivelled body as easily as he might have done that of a child, and so carried him out of the room.

Ducie met his host at the breakfast-table next morning. The latter seemed as well as usual, and was much amused when Ducie told him of his alarm, and how he had summoned Cleon under the impression that Platzoff had been taken dangerously ill.

Platzoff rarely indulged in the luxury of drashkil-smoking oftener than once a week. His constitution was delicate, and a too frequent use of so dangerous a drug would have tended to shatter still further his already enfeebled health. Besides, as he said, he wished to keep it as a luxury, and not, by a too frequent indulgence in it, to take off the fine edge of enjoyment and render it common-place. Ducie had several subsequent opportunities of witnessing the process of drashkil-smoking and its effects, but one description will serve for all. On every occasion the same formula was gone through, precisely as first seen by Ducie. The pipe was charged and lighted by Cleon (after he became ill, by the new servant Jasmin). Precisely at midnight Cleon returned, and either conducted or carried his master to bed, as the necessities of the case might require. It was his knowledge of the latter fact that stood Ducie in such good stead later on, when he came to elaborate the details of his scheme for stealing the Great Hara Diamond.

But as yet his scheme was in embryo. His visit was drawing to a close, and he was still without the slightest clue to the hiding-place of the Diamond.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DIAMOND.

Captain Ducie had been six weeks at Bon Repos; his visit would come to a close in the course of three or four days, but he was still as ignorant of the hiding-place of the Diamond as on that evening when he learned for the first time that M. Platzoff had such a treasure in his possession.

Since the completion of his translation of the stolen MS. he had dreamed day and night of the Diamond. It was said to be worth a hundred and fifty thousand pounds. If he could only succeed in appropriating it, what a different life would be his in time to come! In such a case, he would of course be obliged to leave England for ever. But he was quite prepared to do that. He was without any tie of kindred or friendship that need bind him to his native land. Once safe in another hemisphere, he would dispose of the Diamond, and the proceeds would enable him to live as a gentleman ought to live for the remainder of his days. Truly, a pleasant dream.

But it was only a dream after all, as he himself in his cooler moments was quite ready to acknowledge. It was nothing but a dream even when Platzoff wrung from him an unreluctant consent to extend his visit at Bon Repos for another six weeks. If he stayed for six months, there seemed no likelihood that at the end of that time he would be one whit wiser on the one point on which he thirsted for information than he was now. Still, he was glad for various reasons to retain his pleasant quarters a little while longer.

Truth to tell, in Captain Ducie M. Platzoff had found a guest so

much to his liking that he could not make up his mind to let him go again. Ducie was incurious, or appeared to be so; he saw and heard, and asked no questions. He seemed to be absolutely destitute of political principles, and therein he formed a pleasant contrast both to M. Platzoff himself and to the swarm of foreign gentlemen who at different times found their way to Bon Repos. He was at once a good listener and a good talker. In fine, he made in every way so agreeable, and was at the same time so thorough a gentleman that Platzoff was as glad to retain him as he himself was pleased to stay.

Three out of the Captain's second term of six weeks had nearly come to an end when on a certain evening, as he and Platzoff sat together in the smoke-room, the latter broached a subject which Ducie would have wagered all he possessed—though that was little enough—that his host would have been the last man in the world even to hint at.

"I think I have heard you say that you have a taste for diamonds and precious stones," remarked Platzoff. Ducie had hazarded such a remark on one or two occasions as a quiet attempt to draw Platzoff out, but had only succeeded in eliciting a little shrug and a cold smile, as though for him such a statement could have no possible interest.

"If I have said so to you I have only spoken the truth," replied Ducie. "I am passionately fond of gems and precious stones of every kind. Have you any to show me?"

"I have in my possession a green diamond said to be worth a hundred and fifty thousand pounds," answered the Russian quietly.

The simulated surprise with which Captain Ducie received this announcement was a piece of genuine comedy. His real surprise arose from the fact of Platzoff having chosen to mention the matter to him at all.

"Great heaven!" he exclaimed. "Can you be in earnest? Had I heard such a statement from the lips of any other man than you, I should have questioned either his sanity or his truth."

"You need not question either one or the other in my case," answered Platzoff, with a smile. "My assertion is true to the letter. Some evening when I am less lazy than I am now, you shall see the stone and examine it for yourself."

"I take it as a great proof of your friendship for me, monsieur," said Ducie warmly, "that you have chosen to make me the recipient of such a confidence."

"It *is* a proof of my friendship," said the Russian. "No one of my political friends—and I have many that are dear to me, both in England and abroad—is aware that I have in my possession so inestimable a gem. But you, sir, are an English gentleman, and my friend for reasons unconnected with politics; I know that my secret will be safe in your keeping."

Ducie winced inwardly, but he answered with grave cordiality, "The event, my dear Platzoff, will prove that your confidence has not been misplaced."

After this, the Russian went on to tell Ducie that the MS. lost at the time of the railway accident had reference to the great Diamond; that it contained secret instructions, addressed to a very dear friend of the writer, as to the disposal of the Diamond after his, Platzoff's, death; all of which was quite as well known to Ducie as to the Russian himself; but the Captain sat with his pipe between his lips, and listened with an appearance of quiet interest that impressed his host greatly.

That night Ducie's mind was too excited to allow of sleep. He was about to be shown the great Diamond; but would the mere fact of seeing it advance him one step towards obtaining possession of it? Would Platzoff, when showing him the stone, show him also the place where it was ordinarily kept? His confidence in Ducie would scarcely carry him as far as that. In any case, it would be something to have seen the Diamond, and for the rest, Ducie must trust to the chapter of accidents and his own wits. On one point he was fully determined—to make the Diamond his own at any cost, if the slightest possible chance of doing so were afforded him. He was dazzled by the magnitude of the temptation; so much so, indeed, that he never seemed to realise in his own mind the foulness of the deed by which alone it could become his property. Had any man hinted that he was a thief, either in act or intention, he would have repudiated the term with scorn—would have repudiated it even in his own mind, for he made a point of hoodwinking and cozening himself, as though he were some other person whose good opinion must on no account be forfeited.

Captain Ducie awaited with hidden impatience the hour when it should please M. Platzoff to fulfil his promise. He had not long to wait. Three evenings later, as they sat in the smoking-room, said Platzoff: "To-night you shall see the Great Hara Diamond. No eyes save my own have seen it for ten years. I must ask you to put yourself for an hour or two under my instructions. Are you minded so to do?"

"I shall be most happy to carry out your wishes in every way," answered Ducie. "Consider me as your slave for the time being."

"Attend, then, if you please. This evening you will retire to your own rooms at eleven o'clock. Precisely at one-thirty a.m., you will come back here. You will be good enough to come in your slippers, because it is not desirable that any of the household should be disturbed by our proceedings. I have no further orders at present."

"Your lordship's wishes are my commands," answered Ducie, with a mock salaam.

They sat talking and smoking till eleven; then Ducie left his host

as if for the night. He lay down for a couple of hours on the sofa in his dressing-room. Precisely at one-thirty he was on his way back to the smoke-room, his feet encased in a pair of Indian mocassins. A minute later he was joined by Platzoff in dressing-gown and slippers.

"I need hardly tell you, my dear Ducie," began the latter, "that with a piece of property in my possession no larger than a pigeon's egg, and worth so many thousands of pounds, a secure place in which to deposit that property (since I choose to have it always near me) is an object of paramount importance. That secure place of deposit I have at Bon Repos. This you may accept as one reason for my having lived in such an out-of-the-world spot for so many years. It is a place known to myself alone. After my death it will become known to one person only—to the person into whose possession the Diamond will pass when I shall be no longer among the living. The secret will be told him that he may have the means of finding the Diamond, but not even to him will it become known till after my decease. Under these circumstances, my dear Ducie, you will, I am sure, excuse me for keeping the hiding-place of the Diamond a secret still—a secret even from you. Say—will you not?"

With a malediction at his heart, but with a smile on his lips, Captain Ducie made reply. "Pray offer no excuses, my dear Platzoff, where none are needed. What I want is to see the Diamond itself, not to know where it is kept. Such a piece of information would be of no earthly use to me, and it would involve a responsibility which, under any circumstances, I should hardly care to assume."

"It is well; you are an English gentleman," said the Russian, with a ceremonious inclination of the head, "and your words are based on wisdom and truth. It is necessary that I should blindfold you: oblige me with your handkerchief."

Ducie with a smile handed over his handkerchief, and Platzoff proceeded to blindfold him—an operation which was rapidly and effectually performed by the deft fingers of the Russian.

"Now, give me your hand and come with me, but do not speak till you are spoken to."

So Ducie laid a finger in the Russian's thin, cold palm, and the latter, taking a small bronze hand-lamp, conducted his bandaged companion from the room.

In two minutes after leaving the smoke-room Ducie's geographical ideas of the place were completely at fault. Platzoff led him through so many corridors and passages, turning now to the right hand, and now to the left—he guided him up and down so many flights of stairs, now of stone and now of wood, that he lost his reckoning entirely and felt as though he were being conducted through some place far more spacious than Bon Repos. He counted the number of stairs in each flight that he went up or down. In two or three cases the numbers tallied, which induced him to think that Platzoff

was conducting him twice over the same ground, in order perhaps the more effectually to confuse his ideas as to the position of the place to which he was being led.

After several minutes spent thus in silent perambulation of the old house, they halted for a moment while Platzoff unlocked a door, after which they passed forward into a room, in the middle of which Ducie was left standing while Platzoff relocked the door, and then busied himself for a minute in trimming the lamp he had brought with him, which had been his only guide through the dark and silent house, for the servants had all gone to bed more than an hour ago.

Ducie, thus left to himself for a little while, had time for reflection. The floor on which he was standing was covered with a thick, soft carpet, consequently he was in one of the best rooms in the house. The atmosphere of this room was penetrated with a very faint aroma of pot-pourri, so faint that unless Captain Ducie's nose had been more than ordinarily keen he would never have perceived it. To the best of his knowledge there was only one room in Bon Repos that was permeated with the peculiar scent of pot-pourri. That room was M. Platzoff's private study, to which access was obtained through his bed-room. Ducie had been only twice into this room, but he remembered two facts in connection with it. First, the scent already spoken of; secondly, that besides the door which opened into it from the bed-room, there was another door which he had noticed as being shut and locked both times that he was there. If the room in which they now were was really M. Platzoff's study, they had probably obtained access to it through the second door.

While silently revolving these thoughts in his mind, Captain Ducie's fingers were busy with the formation of two tiny paper pellets, each no bigger than a pea. Unseen by Platzoff, he contrived to drop these pellets on the carpet.

"I must really apologise," said the Russian, next moment, "for keeping you waiting so long; but this lamp will not burn properly."

"Don't hurry yourself on my account," said Ducie. "I am quite jolly. My eyes are ready bandaged; I am only waiting for the axe and the block."

"We are not going to dispose of you in quite so summary a fashion," said the Russian. "One minute more and your eyesight shall be restored to you."

Ducie's quick ears caught a low click, as though someone had touched a spring. Then there was a faint rumbling, as though something were being rolled back on hidden wheels.

"Lend me your hand again, and bend that tall figure of yours. Step carefully. There is another staircase to descend—the last and the steepest of all."

Keeping fast hold of Platzoff's hand, Ducie followed slowly and cautiously, counting the steps as he went down. They were of stone and were twenty-two in number. At the bottom of the staircase

another door was unlocked. The two passed through, and the door was shut and relocked behind them.

"Be blind no longer!" said Platzoff, taking off the handkerchief and handing it to Ducie, with a smile. A few seconds elapsed before the latter could discern anything clearly. Then he saw that he was in a small vaulted chamber about seven feet in height, with a flagged floor, but without furniture of any kind save a small table of black oak on which Platzoff's lamp was now burning. The atmosphere of this dungeon had struck him with a sudden chill as he went in. At each end was a door, both of iron. The one that had opened to admit them was set in the thick masonry of the wall; the one at the opposite end seemed built into the solid rock.

"Before we go any farther," said Platzoff, "I may as well explain to you how it happens that a respectable old country house like Bon Repos has such a suspicious-looking hiding-place about its premises. You must know that I bought the house, many years ago, of the last representative of an old North-country family. He was a bachelor, and in him the family died out. Three years after I had come to reside here the old man, at that time on his death-bed, sent me a letter and a key. The letter revealed to me the secret of the place we are now exploring, of which I had no previous knowledge; the key is that of the two iron doors. It seems that the old man's ancestors had been deeply implicated in the Jacobite risings of last century. The house had been searched several times, and on one occasion occupied by Hanoverian troops. As a provision against such contingencies, this hiding-place (a natural one as far as the cavern beyond is concerned, which has probably existed for thousands of years) was then first connected with the interior of the house, and rendered practicable at a moment's notice; and here on several occasions certain members of the family, together with their plate and title-deeds, lay concealed for weeks at a time. The old gentleman gave me a solemn assurance that the secret existed with him alone; all who had been in any way implicated in the earlier troubles having died long ago. As the property had now become mine by purchase, he thought it only right that before he died these facts should be brought to my knowledge. You may imagine, my dear Ducie, with what eagerness I seized upon this place as a safe depository for my diamond, which, up to this time, I had been obliged to carry about my person. And now, forward to the heart of the mystery!"

Having unlocked and flung open the second iron door, Platzoff took up his lamp, and, closely followed by Ducie, entered a narrow winding passage in the rock. After following this passage, which tended slightly downwards for a considerable distance, they emerged into a large cavernous opening in the heart of the hill.

Platzoff's first act was, by means of a long crook, to draw down within reach of his hand a large iron lamp that was suspended from

the roof by a running chain. This lamp he lighted from the hand-lamp he had brought with him. As soon as released, it ascended to its former position, about ten feet from the ground. It burned with a clear white flame that lighted up every nook and cranny of the place. The sides of the cave were of irregular formation. Measuring by the eye, Ducie estimated the cave to be about sixty yards in length, by a breadth, in the widest part, of twenty. In height it appeared to be about forty feet. The floor was covered with a carpet of thick brown sand, but whether this covering was a natural or an artificial one Ducie had no means of judging. The atmosphere of the place was cold and damp, and the walls in many places dripped with moisture; in other places they scintillated in the lamplight as though thousands of minute gems were embedded in their surface.

In the middle of the floor, on a pedestal of stones loosely piled together, was a hideous idol, about four feet in height, made of wood, and painted in various colours. In the centre of its forehead gleamed the great Diamond.

"Behold!" was all that Platzoff said, as he pointed to the idol. Then they both stood and gazed in silence.

Many contending emotions were at work just then in Ducie's breast, chief of which was a burning, almost unconquerable desire to make that glorious gem his own at every risk. In his ear a fiend seemed to be whispering.

"All you have to do," it seemed to say, "is to grip old Platzoff tightly round the neck for a couple of minutes. His thread of life is frail, and would be easily broken. Then possess yourself of the Diamond and his keys. Go back by the way you came and fasten everything behind you. The household is all a-bed, and you could get away unseen. Long before the body of Platzoff would be discovered, if indeed it were ever discovered, you would be far away and beyond all fear of pursuit. Think! That tiny stone is worth a hundred and fifty thousand pounds."

This was Ducie's temptation. It shook him inwardly as a reed is shaken by the wind. Outwardly he was his ordinary quiet, impassive self, only gazing with eyes that gleamed on the gleaming gem, which shone like a new-fallen star on the forehead of that hideous image.

The spell was broken by Platzoff, who, going up to the idol, and passing his hand through an orifice at the back of the skull, took the Diamond out of its resting-place, close behind the hole in the forehead, through which it was seen from the front. With thumb and forefinger he took it daintily out, and going back to Ducie dropped it into the outstretched palm of the latter.

Ducie turned the Diamond over and over, and held it up before the light between his forefinger and thumb, and tried the weight of it on his palm. It was in the simple form of a table diamond, with only sixteen facets in all, and was just as it had left the fingers of

some Indian cutter, who could say how many centuries ago! It glowed with a green fire, deep, yet tender, that flashed through its facets and smote the duller lamplight with sparkles of intense brilliancy. This, then, was the wondrous gem which for reign after reign was said to have been regarded as their choicest possession by the great lords of Hyderabad. Ducie seemed to be examining it most closely; but, in truth, at that very moment he was debating in his own mind the terrible question of murder or no murder, and scarcely saw the stone itself at all.

"Ami, you do not seem to admire my Diamond!" said the Russian presently, with a touch of pathos in his voice.

Ducie pressed the Diamond back into Platzoff's hands. "I admire it so much," said he, "that I cannot enter into any commonplace terms of admiration. I will talk to you to-morrow respecting it. At present I lack fitting words."

The Russian took back the stone, pressed it to his lips, and then went and replaced it in the forehead of the idol.

"Who is your friend there?" said Ducie, with a desperate attempt to wrench his thoughts away from that all-absorbing temptation.

"I am not sufficiently learned in Hindu mythology to tell you his name with certainty," answered Platzoff. "I take him to be no less a personage than Vishnu. He is seated upon the folds of the snake Jesha, whose seven heads bend over him to afford him shade. In one hand he holds a spray of the sacred lotus. He is certainly hideous enough to be a very great personage. Do you know, my dear Ducie," went on Platzoff, "I have a very curious theory with regard to that Hindu gentleman, whoever he may be. Many years ago he was worshipped in some great Eastern temple, and had priests and acolytes without number to attend to his wants; and then, as now, the great Diamond shone in his forehead. By some mischance the Diamond was lost or stolen—in any case, he was dispossessed of it. From that moment he was an unhappy idol. He derived pleasure no longer from being worshipped, he could rest neither by night nor day—he had lost his greatest treasure. When he could no longer endure this state of wretchedness he stole out of the temple one fine night unknown to anyone, and set out on his travels in search of the missing Diamond. Was it simple accident or occult knowledge, that directed his wanderings after a time to the shop of a London curiosity dealer, where I saw him, fell in love with him, and bought him? I know not: I only know that he and his darling Diamond were at last re-united, and here they have remained ever since. You smile as if I had been relating a pleasant fable. But tell me, if you can, how it happens that in the forehead of yonder idol there is a small cavity lined with gold into which the Diamond fits with the most exact nicety. That cavity was there when I bought the idol and has in no way been altered since. The shape of the

Diamond, as you have seen for yourself, is rather peculiar. Is it therefore possible that mere accident can be at the bottom of such a coincidence? Is not my theory of the Wandering Idol much more probable as well as far more poetical? You smile again. You English are the greatest sceptics in the world. But it is time to go. We have seen all there is to be seen, and the temperature of this place will not benefit my rheumatism.

So the lamp was put out and Idol and Diamond were left to darkness and solitude. In the vaulted room, at the entrance to the winding way that led to the cavern, Ducie's eyes were again bandaged. Then up the twenty-two stone stairs, and so into the carpeted room above, where was the scent of pot-pourri. From this room they came, by many passages and flights of stairs, back to the smoking-room, where Ducie's bandage was removed. One last pipe, a little desultory conversation, and then bed.

M. Platzoff being out of the way for an hour or two next afternoon, Captain Ducie contrived to pay a surreptitious visit to his host's private study. On the carpet he found one of the two paper pellets which he had dropped from his fingers the previous evening. There, too, was the same faint, sickly smell that had filled his nostrils when the handkerchief was over his eyes, which he now traced to a huge china jar in one corner, filled with the dried leaves of flowers gathered long summers before.

CHAPTER XVI.

JANET'S RETURN.

"THERE he is! there is dear Major Strickland!"

The tidal train was just steaming into London Bridge station on a certain spring evening as the above words were spoken. From a window of one of the carriages a bright young face was peering eagerly, a face which lighted up with a smile of rare sweetness the moment Major Strickland's soldierly figure came into view. A tiny gloved hand was held out as a signal, the Major's eye was caught, the train came to a stand, and next moment Janet Hope was on the platform with her arms round the old soldier's neck and her lips held up for a kiss.

The publicity of this transaction seemed slightly to shock the sensibilities of Miss Close, the English teacher in whose charge Janet had come over; but she was won to a quite different view of the affair when the Major, after requesting to be introduced to her, shook her cordially by the hand, said how greatly obliged he was to her for the care she had taken of "his dear Miss Hope," and invited her to dine next day with himself and Janet. Then Miss Close went her way, and the Major and Janet went theirs in a cab to a hotel not a hundred miles from Piccadilly.

Janet's first words as they got clear of the station were:

"And now you must tell me how everybody is at Deepley Walls."

"Everybody was quite well when I left home except one person—Sister Agnes."

"Dear Sister Agnes!" said Janet, and the tears sprang to her eyes in a moment. "I am more sorry than I can tell to hear that she is ill."

"Not ill exactly, but ailing," said the Major. "You must not alarm yourself unnecessarily. She caught a severe cold one wet evening about three months ago as she was on her way home from visiting some poor sick woman in the village, and she seems never to have been quite well since."

"I had a letter from her five days ago, but she never hinted to me that she was not well."

"I can quite believe that. She is not one given to complaining about herself, but one who strives to soothe the complaints of others. The good she does in her quiet way among the poor is something wonderful. I must tell you what an old bed-ridden man, to whom she had been very kind, said to her the other day. Said he, 'If everybody had their rights in this world, ma'am, or if I was king of fairyland, you should have a pair of angel's wings, so that everybody might know how good you are.' And there are a hundred others who would say the same thing."

"If I had not had her dear letters to hearten me and cheer me up, I think that many a time I should have broken down utterly under the dreadful monotony of my life at the Pension Clissot. I had no holidays, in the common meaning of the word; no dear friends to go and see; none even to come once in a way to see me, were it only for one happy hour. I had no home recollections to which I could look back fondly in memory, and the future was all a blank—a mystery. But the letters of Sister Agnes spoke to me like the voice of a dear friend. They purified me, they lifted me out of my common work-a-day troubles and all the petty meannesses of school-girl existence, and set before me the example of a good and noble life as the one thing worth striving for in this weary world."

"Tut, tut, my dear child!" said the Major, "you are far too young to call the world a weary world. Please heaven, it shall not be quite such a dreary place for you in time to come. We will begin the change this very evening. We shall just be in time to get a bit of dinner, and then, heigh! for the play."

"The play, dear Major Strickland!" said Janet, with a sudden flush and an eager light in her eyes; "but would Sister Agnes approve of my going to such a place?"

"I scarcely think, poverina, that Sister Agnes would disapprove of any place to which I might choose to take you."

"Forgive me!" cried Janet; "I did not intend you to construe my words in that way."

"I have never construed anything since I was at school fifty years ago," answered the Major, laughingly. "Can you tell me now from your heart, little one, that you would not like to go to the play?"

"I should like very, very much to go, and after what has been said I will never forgive you if you do not take me."

"The penalty would be too severe. It is agreed that we shall go."

"To me it seems only seven days instead of seven years since I was last driven through London streets," resumed Janet, as they were crawling up Fleet Street. "The same shops, the same houses, and even, as it seems to me, the same people crowding the pathways; and, to complete the illusion, the same kind travelling companion now as then."

"To me the illusion seems by no means so complete. To London Bridge, seven years ago, I took a simple child of twelve: to-day I bring back a young lady of nineteen—a woman, in point of fact—who, I have no doubt, understands more of flirtation than she does of French, and would rather graduate in coquetry than in crochet-work."

"Take care then, sir, lest I wing my unslaked arrows at you."

"You are too late in the day, dear child, to practise on me. I am your devoted slave already—bound fast to the wheel of your triumphant car. What more would you have?"

The hotel was reached at last, and the Major gave Janet a short quarter of an hour for her toilette. When she got downstairs dinner was on the point of being served, and she found covers laid for three. Before she had time to ask a question, the third person entered the room. He was a tall, well-built man of six or seven and twenty. He had light-brown hair, closely cropped, but still inclined to curl, and a thick beard and moustache of the same colour. He had blue eyes, and a pleasant smile, and the easy, self-possessed manner of one who had seen "the world of men and things." His left sleeve was empty.

Janet did not immediately recognise him, he looked so much older, so different in every way; but at the first sound of his voice she knew who stood before her. He came forward and held out his hand—the one hand that was left him.

"May I venture to call myself an old friend, Miss Hope? And to trust that even after all these years I am not quite forgotten?"

"I recognise you by your voice, not by your face. You are Mr. George Strickland. You it was who saved my life. Whatever else I may have forgotten, I have not forgotten that."

"I am too well pleased to find that I live in your memory at all to cavil with your reason for recollecting me."

"But—but, I never heard—no one ever told me——" Then she stopped with tears in her eyes, and glanced at his empty sleeve.

"That I had left part of myself in India," he said, finishing the sentence for her. "Such, nevertheless, is the case. Uncle there

says that the yellow rascals were so fond of me that they could not bear to part from me altogether. For my own part, I think myself fortunate that they did not keep me there *in toto*, in which case I should not have had the pleasure of meeting you here to-day."

He had been holding her hand quite an unnecessary length of time. She now withdrew it gently. Their eyes met for one brief instant, then Janet turned away and seated herself at the table. The flush caused by the surprise of the meeting still lingered on her face, the tear-drops still lingered in her eyes; and as George Strickland sat down opposite to her he thought that he had never seen a sweeter vision, nor one that appealed more directly to his imagination and his heart.

Janet Hope at nineteen was very pleasant to look upon. Her face was not one of mere commonplace prettiness, but had an individuality of its own that caused it to linger in the memory like some sweet picture that once seen cannot be readily forgotten. Her eyes were of a tender, luminous grey, full of candour and goodness. Her hair was a deep, glossy brown; her face was oval, and her nose a delicate aquiline. On ordinary occasions she had little or no colour, yet no one could have taken the clear pallor of her cheek as a token of ill-health; it seemed rather a result of the depth and earnestness of the life within her.

In her wardrobe there was a lack of things fashionable, and as she sat at dinner this evening she had on a dress of black alpaca, made after a very quiet and nun-like style; with a thin streak of snow-white collar and cuff round throat and wrist; but without any ornament save a necklace of bog-oak, cut after an antique pattern, and a tiny gold locket in which was a photographic likeness of Sister Agnes.

That was a very pleasant little dinner-party. In the course of conversation it came out that, a few days previously, Captain George had been decorated with the Victoria Cross. Janet's heart thrilled within her as the Major told in simple, unexaggerated terms of the special deed of heroism by which the great distinction had been won. The Major told also how George was now invalided on half-pay; and her heart thrilled with a still sweeter emotion when he went on to say that the young soldier would henceforth reside with him at Eastbury —at Eastbury, which was only two short miles from Deepley Walls! The feeling with which she heard this simple piece of news was one to which she had hitherto been an utter stranger. She asked herself, and blushed as she asked, whence this new sweet feeling emanated? But she was satisfied with asking the question, and seemed to think that no answer was required.

When dinner was over, they set out for the play. Janet had never been inside a theatre before, and for her the experience was an utterly novel and delightful one.

On the third day after Janet's arrival in London they all went

down to Eastbury together—the Major, and she and George. But in the course of those three days the Major took Janet about a good deal, and introduced her to nearly all the orthodox sights of the Great City—and a strange kaleidoscopic jumble they seemed at the time, only to be afterwards rearranged by memory as portions of a bright and sunny picture the like of which she scarcely dared hope ever to see again.

Captain Strickland parted from the Major and Janet at Eastbury station. The two latter were bound for Deepley Walls, for the Major felt that his task would have been ill-performed had he failed to deliver Janet into Lady Chillington's own hands. As they rumbled along the quiet country roads—which brought vividly back to Janet's mind the evening when she saw Deepley Walls for the first time—the Major said: "Do you remember, poppetina, how seven years ago I spoke to you of a certain remarkable likeness which you then bore to someone whom I knew when I was quite a young man, or has the circumstance escaped your memory?"

"I remember quite well your speaking of the likeness, and I have often wondered since who the original was of whom I was such a striking copy. I remember, too, how positively Lady Chillington denied the resemblance which you so strongly insisted upon."

"Will her ladyship dare to deny it to-day?" said the Major sternly. "I tell you, child, that now you are grown up, the likeness seen by me seven years ago is still more clearly visible. When I look into your eyes I seem to see my own youth reflected there. When you are near me I can fancy that my lost treasure has not been really lost to me—that she has merely been asleep, like the princess in the story-book, and that while time has moved on for me, she has come back out of her enchanted slumber as fresh and beautiful as when I saw her last. Ah, poverina! you cannot imagine what a host of recollections the sight of your sweet face conjures up whenever I choose to let my day-dreams have way for a little while."

"I remember your telling me that my parents were unknown to you," answered Janet. "Perhaps the lady to whom I bear so strong a resemblance was my mother."

"No, not your mother, Janet. The lady to whom I refer died unmarried. She and I had been engaged to each other for three years; but death came and claimed her a fortnight before the day fixed for our wedding; and here I am, a lonely old bachelor still."

"Not quite lonely, dear Major Strickland," murmured Janet, as she lifted his hand and pressed it to her lips.

"True, child, not quite lonely. I have George, whom I love as though he were a son of my own. And there is Aunt Felicity, as the children used to call her, who is certainly very fond of me, as I also am of her."

"Not forgetting poor me," said Janet.

"Not forgetting you, dear, whom I love as a daughter."

"And who loves you very sincerely in return."

A few minutes later they drew up at Deepley Walls.

CHAPTER XVII.

DEEPLEY WALLS AFTER SEVEN YEARS.

MAJOR STRICKLAND rang the bell, and the door was opened by a servant who was strange to Janet.

"Be good enough to inform Lady Chillington that Major Strickland and Miss Hope have just arrived from town, and inquire whether her ladyship has any commands."

The servant returned presently. "Her ladyship will see Major Strickland. Miss Hope is to go to the housekeeper's room.'

"I will see you again, poverina, after my interview with her ladyship," said the Major, as he went off in charge of the footman.

Janet, left alone, threaded her way by the old familiar passages to the housekeeper's room. Dance was not there, being probably in attendance on Lady Chillington, and Janet had the room to herself. Her heart was heavy within her. There was a chill sense of friendlessness, of being alone in the world upon her. Were these cold walls to be the only home her youth would ever know? A few slow salt tears welled from her eyes as she sat brooding over the little wood fire, till presently there came a sound of footsteps, and the Major's hand was laid caressingly upon her shoulder.

"What, all alone!" he said; "and with nothing better to do than read fairy tales in the glowing embers! Is there no one in all this big house to attend to your wants? But Dance will be here presently, I have no doubt, and the good old soul will do her best to make you comfortable. I have been to pay my respects to her ladyship, who is in one of her unamiable moods this evening. I, however, contrived to wring from her a reluctant consent to your paying Aunt Felicity and me a visit now and then at Eastbury, and it shall be my business to see that the promise is duly carried out."

"Then I am to remain at Deepley Walls!" said Janet. "I thought it probable that my visit might be for a few weeks only, as my first one was."

"From what Lady Chillington said, I imagine that the present arrangement is to be a permanent one; but she gave no hint of the mode in which she intended to make use of your services, and that she will make use of you in some way, no one who knows her can doubt. And now, dear, I must say good-bye for the present; good-bye and God bless you! You may look to see me again within the week. Keep up your spirits, and — but here comes Dance, who will cheer you up far better than I can."

As the Major went out, Dance came in. The good soul seemed quite unchanged, except that she had grown older and mellower, and

seemed to have sweetened with age like an apple plucked unripe. A little cry of delight burst from her lips the moment she saw Janet. But in the very act of rushing forward with outstretched arms, she stopped. She stopped, and stared, and then curtsied as though involuntarily. "If the dead are ever allowed to come back to this earth, there is one of them before me now!" she murmured.

Janet caught the words, but her heart was too full to notice them just then. She had her arms round Dance's neck in a moment, and her bright young head was pressed against the old servant's faithful breast.

"Oh, Dance, Dance, I am so glad you are come!"

"Hush, dear heart! hush, my poor child! you must not take on in that way. It seems a poor coming home for you—for I suppose Deepley Walls is to be your home in time to come—but there are those under this roof that love you dearly. Eh! but you are grown tall and bonny, and look as fresh and sweet as a morning in May. Her ladyship ought to be proud of you. But she gets that cantankerous and cross-grained in her old age that you never know what will suit her for two minutes at a time. For all that, her spirit is just wonderful, and she is a real lady, every inch of her. And you, Miss Janet, you are a thorough lady; anybody can see that, and her ladyship will see it as soon as anybody. She will like you none the worse for being a gentlewoman. But here am I preaching away like any old gadabout, and you not as much as taken your bonnet off yet. Get your things off, dearie, and I'll have a cup of tea ready in no time, and you'll feel ever so much better when you have had it."

Dance could scarcely take her eyes off Janet's face, so attracted was she by the likeness which had rung from her an exclamation on entering the room.

But Janet was tired, and reserved all questions till the morrow; all questions, except one. That one was——

"How is Sister Agnes?"

Dance shook her head solemnly. "No worse and no better than she has been for the last two months. There is something lingering about her that I don't like. She is far from well, and yet not exactly what we call ill. Morning, noon and night she seems so terribly weary, and that is just what frightens me. She has asked after you I don't know how many times, and when tea is over you must go and see her. Only I must warn you, dear Miss Janet, not to let your feelings overcome you when you see her—not to make a scene. In that case your coming would do her not good, but harm."

Janet recovered her spirits in a great measure before tea was over. She and Dance had much to talk about, many pleasant reminiscences to call up and discuss. As if by mutual consent, Lady Chillington's name was not mentioned between them.

As soon as tea was over, Dance went to inquire when Sister Agnes would see Miss Hope. The answer was, "I will see her at once."

So Janet went with hushed footsteps up the well-remembered staircase, opened the door softly, and stood for a moment on the threshold. Sister Agnes was lying on a sofa. She put her hand suddenly to her side and rose to her feet as Janet entered the room. A tall, wasted figure robed in black, with a thin, spiritualised face, the natural pallor of which was just now displaced by a transient flush that faded out almost as quickly as it had come. The white headdress had been cast aside for once, and the black hair, streaked with silver, was tied in a simple knot behind. The large dark eyes looked larger and darker than they had ever looked before, and seemed lit up with an inner fire that had its source in another world than ours.

Sister Agnes advanced a step or two and held out her arms. "My darling!" was all she said as she pressed Janet to her heart, and kissed her again and again. They understood each other without words. The feeling within them was too deep to find expression in any commonplace greeting.

The excitement of the meeting was too much for the strength of Sister Agnes. She was obliged to lie down again. Janet sat by her side, caressing one of her wasted hands.

"Your coming has made me very, very happy," murmured Sister Agnes after a time.

"Through all the seven dreary years of my school life," said Janet, "the expectation of some day seeing you again was the one golden dream that the future held before me. That dream has now come true. How I have looked forward to this day none save those who have been circumstanced as I have can more than faintly imagine."

"Are you at all acquainted with Lady Chillington's intentions in asking you to come to Deepley Walls?"

"Not in the least. A fortnight ago I had no idea that I should so soon be here. I knew that I could not stay much longer at the Pension Clissot, and naturally wondered what instructions Madame Delclos would receive from Lady Chillington as to my disposal. The last time I saw her ladyship, her words seemed to imply that, after my education should be finished, I should have to trust to my own exertions for earning a livelihood. In fact, I have looked upon myself all along as ultimately destined to add one more unit to the great tribe of governesses."

"Such a fate shall not be yours if my weak arm has power to avert it," said Sister Agnes. "For the present your services are required at Deepley Walls, in the capacity of 'companion' to Lady Chillington—in brief, to occupy the position held by me for so many years, but from which I am now obliged to secede on account of ill-health."

Janet was almost too astounded to speak.

"Companion to Lady Chillington! I! Impossible!" was all that she could say.

"Why impossible, dear Janet?" asked Sister Agnes, with her low,

sweet voice. "I see no element of impossibility in such an arrangement. The duties of the position have been filled by me for many years; they have now devolved upon you, and I am not aware of anything that need preclude your acceptance of them."

"We are not all angels like you, Sister Agnes," said Janet. "Lady Chillington, as I remember, is a very peculiar woman. She has no regard for the feelings of others, especially when those others are her inferiors in position. She says the most cruel things she can think of and cares nothing how deeply they may wound. I am afraid that she and I would never agree."

"That Lady Chillington is a very peculiar woman I am quite ready to admit. That she will say things to you that may seem hard and cruel, and that may wound your feelings, I will also allow. But granting all this, I can deduce from it no reason why the position should be refused by you. Had you gone out as governess, you would probably have had fifty things to contend against quite as disagreeable as Lady Chillington's temper and cynical remarks. You are young, dear Janet, and life's battle has yet to be fought by you. You must not expect that everything in this world will arrange itself in accordance with your wishes. You will have many difficulties to fight against and overcome, and the sooner you make up your mind to the acceptance of that fact, the better it will be for you in every way. If I have found the position of companion to Lady Chillington not quite unendurable, why should it be found so by you? Besides, her ladyship has many claims upon you—upon your best services in every way. Every farthing that has been spent upon you from the day you were born to the present time has come out of her purse. Except mere life itself, you owe everything to her. And even if this were not so, there are other and peculiar ties between you and her, of which you know nothing (although you may possibly be made acquainted with them by-and-by), which are in themselves sufficient to lead her to expect every reasonable obedience at your hands. You must clothe yourself with good temper, dear Janet, as with armour of proof. You must make up your mind beforehand that however harsh her ladyship's remarks may sometimes seem, you will not answer her again. Do this, and her words will soon be powerless to sting you. Instead of feeling hurt or angry, you will be inclined to pity her—to pray for her. And she deserves pity, Janet, if any woman in this sinful world ever did. To have severed of her own accord those natural ties which other people cherish so fondly; to see herself fading into a dreary old age, and yet of her own free will to shut out the love that should attend her by the way and strew flowers on her path; to have no longer a single earthly hope or pleasure beyond those connected with each day's narrow needs or with the heaping together of more money where there was enough before—in all this there is surely room enough for pity, but none for any harsher feeling."

"Dear Sister Agnes, your words make me thoroughly ashamed of myself," said Janet, with tearful earnestness. "Arrogance ill becomes one like me who have been dependent on the charity of others from the day of my birth. Whatever task may be set me either by Lady Chillington or by you, I will do it to the best of my ability. Will you for this once pardon my petulance and ill-temper, and I will strive not to offend you again?"

"I am not offended, darling; far from it. I felt sure that you had good-sense and good-feeling enough to see the matter in its right light when it was properly put before you. But have you no curiosity as to the nature of your new duties?"

"Very little at present, I must confess," answered Janet, with a wan smile. "The chief thing for which I care just now is to know that so long as I remain at Deepley Walls I shall be near you; and that of itself would be sufficient to enable me to rest contented under worse inflictions than Lady Chillington's ill-temper."

"You ridiculous Janet! Ah! if I only dared to tell you everything. But that must not be. Let us rather talk of what your duties will be in your new situation."

"Yes, tell me about them, please," said Janet, "and you shall see in time to come that your words have not been forgotten."

"To begin: you will have to go to her ladyship's room precisely at eight every morning. Sometimes she will not want you, in which case you will be at liberty till after breakfast. Should she want you it will probably be to read to her while she sips her chocolate, or it may be to play a game of backgammon with her before she gets up. A little later on you will be able to steal an hour or so for yourself, as while her ladyship is undergoing the elaborate processes of the toilette, your services will not be required. On coming down, if the weather be fine, she will want the support of your arm during her stroll on the terrace. If the weather be wet, she will probably attend to her correspondence and book-keeping, and you will have to fill the parts both of amanuensis and accountant. When Mr. Madgin, her ladyship's man of business, comes up to Deepley Walls, you will have to be in attendance to take notes, write down instructions, and so on. By-and-by will come luncheon, of which, as a rule, you will partake with her. After luncheon you will be your own mistress for an hour while her ladyship sleeps. The moment she wakes you will have to be in attendance, either to play to her, or else to read to her—perhaps a little French or Italian, in both of which languages I hope you are tolerably proficient. Your next duty will be to accompany her ladyship in her drive out. When you get back, will come dinner, but only when specially invited will you sit down with Lady Chillington. When that honour is not accorded you, you and I will dine here, darling, by our two selves."

"Then I hope Lady Chillington will not invite me oftener than once a month," cried impulsive Janet.

"The number of your invitations to dinner will depend upon the extent of her liking for you, so that we shall soon know whether or no you are a favourite. She may or may not require you after dinner. If she does require you, it may be either for reading or music, or to play backgammon with her; or even to sit quietly with her without speaking, for the mere sake of companionship. One fact you will soon discover for yourself—that her ladyship does not like to be long alone. And now, dearest, I think I have told you enough for the present. We will talk further of these things to-morrow. Give me just one kiss and see what you can find to play among that heap of old music on the piano. Madame Delclos used to write in raptures of your style and touch. We will now prove whether her eulogy was well-founded."

Janet found that she was not to occupy the same bed-room as on her first visit to Deepley Walls, but one nearer that of Sister Agnes. She was not sorry for this, for there had been a secret dread upon her of having to sleep in a room so near that occupied by the body of Sir John Chillington. She had never forgotten her terrible experience in connection with the Black Room, and she wished to keep herself entirely free from any such influences in time to come. The first question she asked Dance when they reached her bed-room was—

"Does Sister Agnes still visit the Black Room every midnight?"

"Yes, for sure," answered Dance. "There is no one but her to do it. Her ladyship would not allow any of the servants to enter the room. Rather than that, I believe she would herself do what has to be done there. Sister Agnes would not neglect that duty if she was dying."

Janet said no more, but then and there she made up her mind to a certain course of action of which nothing would have made her believe herself capable only an hour before.

Early next forenoon she was summoned to an interview with Lady Chillington. Her heart beat more quickly than common as she was ushered by Dance into the old woman's dressing-room.

Her ladyship was in demi-toilette—made up in part for the day but not yet finished. Her black wig, with its long corkscrew curls was carefully adjusted; her rouge and powder were artistically laid on, her eyebrows elaborately pointed, and in so far she looked as she always looked when visible to anyone but her maid. But her figure wanted bracing up, so to speak, and looked shrunken and shrivelled in the old cashmere dressing-robe, from which at that early hour she had not emerged. Her fingers — long, lean and yellow — were decorated with some half-dozen valuable rings. Increasing years had not tended to make her hands steadier than Janet remembered them as being when she last saw her ladyship; and of late it had become a matter of some difficulty with her to keep her head quite still: it seemed possessed by an unaccountable desire to imitate the

shaking of her hands. She was seated in an easy-chair as Janet entered the room. Her breakfast equipage was on a small table at her elbow.

As the door closed behind Janet, she stood still and curtsied.

Lady Chillington placed her glass to her eye, and with a lean forefinger beckoned to Janet to draw near. Janet advanced, her eyes fixed steadily on those of Lady Chillington. A yard or two from the table she stopped and curtsied again.

"I hope that I have the happiness of finding your ladyship quite well," she said, in a low, clear voice, in which there was not the slightest tremor or hesitation.

"And pray, Miss Hope, what can it matter to you whether I am well or ill? Answer me that, if you please."

"I owe so much to your ladyship, I have been such a pensioner on your bounty ever since I can remember anything, that mere selfishness alone, if no higher motive be allowed me, must always prompt me to feel an interest in the state of your ladyship's health."

"Candid, at any rate. But I wish you clearly to understand that whatever obligation you may feel yourself under to me for what is past and gone, you have no claim of any kind upon me for the future. The tie between us can be severed by me at any moment."

"Seven years ago your ladyship impressed that fact so strongly on my mind that I have never forgotten it. I have never felt myself to be other than a dependent on your bounty."

"A very praiseworthy feeling, young lady, and one which I trust you will continue to cherish. Not that I wish other people to look upon you as a dependent. I wish ——" She broke off abruptly, and stared helplessly round the room. Suddenly her head began to shake. "Heaven help me! what do I wish?" she exclaimed; and with that she began to cry, and seemed all in a moment to have grown older by twenty years.

Janet, in her surprise, made a step or two forward, but Lady Chillington waved her fiercely back. "Fool! fool! why don't you go away?" she cried. "Why do you stare at me so? Go away, and send Dance to me. You have spoilt my complexion for the day."

Janet left the room and sent Dance to her mistress, and then went off for a ramble in the grounds. The seal of desolation and decay was set upon everything. The garden, no longer the choice home of choice flowers, was weed-grown and neglected. The greenhouses were empty, and falling to pieces for lack of a few simple repairs. The shrubs and evergreens had all run wild for want of pruning, and in several places the dividing hedges were broken down, and through the breaches sheep had intruded themselves into the private grounds. Even the house itself had a shabby out-at-elbows air, like a gentleman fallen upon evil days. Several of the upper windows were shuttered, some of the others showed a broken pane or two. Here and there a shutter had fallen away, or was hanging by a solitary

hinge, suggesting thoughts of ghostly flappings to and fro in the rough wind on winter nights. Doors and window frames were blistering and splitting for want of paint. Close by the sacred terrace itself lay the fragments of a broken chimney-pot, blown down during the last equinoctial gales and suffered to lie where it had fallen. Everywhere were visible tokens of that miserly thrift which, carried to excess, degenerates into unthrift of the worst and meanest kind, from which the transition to absolute ruin is both easy and certain.

For a full hour Janet trod the weed-grown walks with clasped hands and saddened eyes. At the end of that time Dance came in search of her. Lady Chillington wanted to see her again.

(To be continued.)

SPES.

"When we meet," she said. We never
Met again—the world is wide :
Leagues of sea, then Death did sever
Me from my betrothed Bride.
When we parted, long ago—
Long it seems in sorrow musing—
Fair she stood, with face aglow,
In my heart a hope infusing.
Now I linger at the grave,
While the winds of Winter rave.

"When we meet," the words are ringing
Clear as when they left her lips,
Clear as when her faith upspringing
Fronted life and life's eclipse—
Rest, dear heart, dear hands, dear feet,
Rest ; in spite of Death's endeavour,
Thou art mine ; we soon shall meet,
Ocean, Death be passed for ever.
Thus I linger by the grave,
Cherishing the hope she gave.

John Jervis Beresford, M.A.
(Author of "Last Year's Leaves.

LONGEVITY.

By W. F. Ainsworth, F.S.A.

DISDAIN of the inevitable end is said to be the finest trait of mankind. Some profess to be weary of life, of its pains and penalties, its anxieties and sufferings, and to look upon death as a relief. Such states of mind are not real; they are either assumed or affected. No one can really hold the unsparing leveller—dreaded of all—in contempt. As to pretended wearisomeness of life, laying aside the love of life and fear of death, which are common to all mankind, there are habits and ties of affection, joys and hopes that never depart from us and make us cling to existence.

There are, no doubt, pains and sufferings which make many almost wish for the time being for death as a release; but these pass away. Time assuages all grief, as Nature relieves suffering beyond endurance by fainting and insensibility. Man may nerve himself to death or become resigned to it and meet it even with cheerfulness; and he may, in all sincerity of heart, offer up his life to his Maker to save that of a beloved one; but there is a latent—an unacknowledged —yet an irrepressible reserve in such frames of mind.

Few men can prepare for death, or offer themselves up for a sacrifice, without feelings of a mixed nature playing a part in the act; whether forced or springing from self-abnegation. As to suicide, it is inevitably accompanied by certain—albeit various and different—degrees of mental alienation or disease. No one who is in a really healthy state of mind, whose faculties are perfectly balanced, or who is at peace with God and man, commits suicide. The temporary exaltation of grief, despondency or disappointment produces as utter a state of insanity as disease itself.

Man, as a rule, desires to live. It is part of his nature to do so; and exceptions to the rule are rare and unnatural—so much so that they in all cases imply a certain degree of mental alienation. Even the weariness, lassitude and despondency which lead some to talk of death as a release is mainly to be met with in the pampered and the idle. Such feelings, no doubt, take possession also of the poor and the lowly; but that, mostly, when there is no work or no incitement to it. There is always joy and happiness in work and in doing one's duty.

It is then the normal condition to wish to live, and a most abnormal one to wish to die; and with many there is even a further aspiration, and that is to prolong a life which, with all its drawbacks, is to so many a desirable state of things.

Examples of rare longevity are carefully treasured up and even placed on record. As whenever a human being is carried away,

causes from which we are supposed to be free, or against which we take precautions, are complacently sought for, so instances of longevity are studied to discover what habits and manners, what system of diet, or conduct, and which environing circumstances, have most tended to ensure such a result.

Numerous treatises have been written on the subject, both in this country and on the continent; but it cannot be said that the result has been eminently satisfactory. When carefully inquired into, it has been found that the most contradictory state of things has been in existence. It is not always to the strong that long life is given, nor is such, as often supposed, hereditary. Riches and the comforts and luxuries they place at man's disposal no more conduce to long life than poverty. Even moderation and temperance, so universally admitted as essentials to health and long life, are found to have their exceptions in well-attested cases of prolongation of life with the luxurious and self-indulgent and even in the intemperate and the inebriate. Strange to say, even health is not always conducive to long life. There is a common proverb (and most proverbs are founded upon experience) about creaking hinges, and so it is that people always ailing have been known to live longer than the strong, the hearty, and the healthy. The latter have overtaxed their strength, their spirits, and their health. Even vitality itself, stronger in some than others, may in excess conduce to the premature wearing out and decay of the faculties and powers.

It is not surprising, then, that great difficulties have had to be encountered in fixing any general laws by which longevity can be assured; yet such are in existence, and like all the gracious gifts of a most merciful Creator, are at the easy command and disposal of mankind.

They are to be found in implicit obedience to the Laws of God and Nature. These imply the use and not the misuse or abuse of all the powers and faculties given to us by an all-wise and all-merciful Providence. If human beings would only abide by these laws they would not only enjoy long health and long life but they would also pass that life in comfort and happiness.

With respect to the physical, intellectual and moral man, work is the essential factor in procuring health and happiness. Idleness is the bane of both. Man and woman were born to work either by hand or brain. Man in the outer world, woman in the home. The man who lives without an object in life is not only not doing his duty to God, but he is a curse to himself and others. But work like everything else, should be limited. Many cannot do this, and overtax both their physical and intellectual energies. The employment of labour should be regulated by the capabilities of the working-classes, not by the economy or profits to be obtained by extra labour; and legislation, if paternal, as it should be, ought to protect the toiler in all instances—not in the few in which

ıttempts to ameliorate his condition. So with every pursuit or ıvocation, the leisure essential to health and happiness is too often ;acrificed to cupidity, and when this is the case there can be no ongevity.

Exercise is beneficial to man; but it should not be taken in excess, or in too trying a form. It is very questionable if what are :alled "Athletic Sports" are not too often as hurtful as they are)eneficial. It is quite certain that they cannot be indulged in with mpunity after a certain time of life.

Sustenance is essential alike to life and longevity, but it is trite to ay it must be in moderation, and as far as possible select. So in he case of temperance, moderation is beneficial, excess hurtful. Total abstainers defeat the very object they propose to advocate when they propose to do away with all because excess is hurtful. Extremes are always baneful, and the monks of old were wise in heir generation when they denounced gluttony and intemperance as ardinal vices. The physical powers are as a rule subject to the vill, which is the exponent of our passions and propensities and of ur moral and intellectual impulses. Were it not so we could not urb our actions, restrain our appetites, or keep within that ıoderation which is essential to health, happiness and longevity.

Our passions and propensities are imparted to us for a wise urpose, and are therefore beneficial in their use. It is only in their eglect, misuse or abuse that they become hurtful. A French uthor has pertinently put it thus: "The passions act as winds to ropel our vessel, our reason is the pilot that steers her; without the inds she would not move, without the pilot she would be lost."

Even our affections, so pure and beautiful in themselves, may, by)use, be made sources of mischief, evil and disease. The abuses :e too well known to require repetition here. The powers of energy ıd resistance, beneficial in themselves, in their abuse bring about ıe spirit of contradiction, violence and combat.

It seems passing strange that even our moral feelings should be ıble to abuse; but it is so, even with the best. Benevolence and ıarity may be misplaced or be in excess of our means. They assume ıe shape of vices in the form of prodigality and extravagance. The)nest desire to acquire the necessities of life or the means for moral ıd intellectual improvement may in excess become cupidity or)vetousness, and lead even to the appropriation of what is not our vn. Kleptomania is met with in the book-worm or the antiquarian, well as in the feminine lover of dress or those in poverty and stress. Firmness may become obstinacy; the justifiable love of self ay, by abuse, become pride; and a proper and chaste wish for the probation of others may be turned into the most absurd of nities. Even religion itself may be carried to uncharitableness, ıaticism and persecution. Still more strange it must appear that en the intellectual faculties should be liable to abuse; but it is part

of the pains and penalties of the constitution of man that it should be so. It is so to teach us that moderation is wisdom and the only conduct that leads to health and happiness.

The abuse of the moral faculties is directly injurious; that of the intellectual faculties mostly so in an indirect manner. Such abuses are more hurtful by the influence they have upon the conduct than they have upon the intellect itself. If a man's judgment is unsound, for example, it leads to deleterious consequences, not only to himself, but to others. If the powers of observation are weak, and a person is deficient in the capacity of judging of form, distance or locality, he will be incapacitated from success in many pursuits of life without his suffering thereby, except in an indirect manner. The imagination, the noblest manifestation of intellect, may, without judgment, be allowed to run riot, or abused by its exaltation; and with the faculty of wonder may lead to superstition, fanaticism and folly. The intellectual faculties may be altogether weak or almost wanting. In such cases we have foolishness merging into idiocy.

The examples here given of use, as opposed to neglect, misuse, or abuse, are simply illustrative of the point in question. They might be extended in an indefinite degree, especially if it were proposed to enter into details. They will, however, suffice for the purpose in view, which is to show that the use of all the powers and faculties granted to us by the Creator is intended for our benefit, and is conducive to health, happiness and longevity, but that their neglect or their abuse leads to misery, pain, affliction, disaster and disease.

The lesson to be conveyed is that moderation is essential in all things. Why is it that the sickly and the ailing sometimes survive the strong and hearty? Because suffering has taught the former moderation, whilst the sense of power leads the latter to excesses which too often prove fatal. Everyone has, in his experience, known instances of the kind.

But the use and not the neglect or abuse of the faculties is the observance of the laws of God and Nature. If neglect and misuse of our faculties lead to loss of power, so their abuse leads to bad conduct and its pains and penalties. What has been here termed moderation, as a medium between neglect, use and abuse, is really obedience to the laws of God and Nature.

The whole secret of health, happiness and longevity lies then in this simple observance, if it can only be fully understood, appreciated in all its importance, and carried out in all the smallest details of life. As such perfection is rare, and somewhat difficult to attain—the trials and temptations of life being so great—so are none of the results here enumerated often arrived at; but that is no reason why man should not endeavour to reach as near perfection as possible, and enjoy as much health and happiness as he can. One of the most common and one of the greatest errors is to suppose that happiness is to be obtained by the pursuit of pleasure and excitement. The

temporary enjoyment created by such is inevitably followed by reaction—lassitude and weariness—and human nature is palled by the surfeit of amusement as much as it is by the luxuries of the table. There cannot be a more humiliating spectacle than that of the man of the world, as he is called, or the woman of fashion or pleasure. Blasé is too considerate an expression. Such persons are worn-out prematurely in body, mind and intellect—they are soulless and unsympathetic—the wrecks of the noble creatures God created as man and woman in all the simplicity of their nature.

It is surely worth while, then, considering whether the enjoyment of health and happiness is not worth a little study and a little sacrifice of the vain and imaginary pleasures of the world. There is no doubt that some amount of restraint and some power of self-control are requisite to ensure moderation. But the disdain of many pleasures is a chief part of what is commonly called wisdom.

It is with waking and sleeping, with talking and walking, with eating and drinking, with toil and labour, with all the acts of life, that moderation or obedience to the laws of Nature requires some little sacrifice in their observance ; but it is quite certain that without this obedience there is neither health nor happiness nor longevity.

SONNET.

WHO said that there were slaves? There may be men
In bondage, bought or sold: there are no slaves
Whilst God looks down, whilst Christ's most pure blood laves
The black man's sins ; whilst within angel ken
He bears his load and drags his iron chain.
The slaves are they whom, on His Judgment Day,
God shall renounce for aye and cast away.
Oh, Jesus Christ! Thou wilt give justice then!
A drop of blood shall seem a swelling sea,
More piercing than a cry the lowest moan.
Come down, ye mountains! in your gloom come down,
And bury deep the sinner's agony!
Master and slave have past ; Time, thou art gone :
Eternity begins—Christ rules alone!

JULIA KAVANAGH.

THE SILENT CHIMES.

NOT HEARD.

THAT oft-quoted French saying, a mauvais-quart-d'heure, is a pregnant one, and may apply to small as well as to great worries of life: most of us know it to our cost. But, rely upon it, one of the very worst is that when a bride or bridegroom has to make a disagreeable confession to the other, which ought to have been made before going to church.

Philip Hamlyn was finding it so. Standing over the fire, in their sitting-room at the Old Ship Hotel at Brighton, his elbow on the mantelpiece, his hand shading his eyes, he looked down at his wife sitting opposite him, and disclosed his tale: that when he married her fifteen days ago he had not been a bachelor, but a widower. There was no especial reason for his not having told her, save that he hated and abhorred that earlier period of his life and instinctively shunned its remembrance.

Sent to India by his friends in the West Indies to make his way in the world, he entered one of the most important mercantile houses in Calcutta, purchasing a lucrative post in it. Mixing in the best society, for his introductions were undeniable, he in course of time met with a young lady named Pratt, who had come out from England to stay with her elderly cousins, Captain Pratt and his sister. Philip Hamlyn was caught by her pretty doll's face, and married her. They called her Dolly: and a doll she was, by nature as well as by name.

"Marry in haste and repent at leisure," is as true a saying as the French one. Philip Hamlyn found it so. Of all vain, frivolous, heartless women, Mrs. Dolly Hamlyn turned out to be about the worst. Just a year or two of uncomfortable bickering, of vain endeavours on his part, now coaxing, now reproaching, to make her what she was not and never would be—a reasonable woman, a sensible wife—and Dolly Hamlyn fled. She decamped with a hair-brained lieutenant, the two taking sailing-ship for England, and she carrying with her her little one-year-old boy.

I'll leave you to guess what Philip Hamlyn's sensations were. A calamity such as that does not often fall upon man. While he was taking steps to put his wife legally away for ever and to get back his child, and Captain Pratt was aiding and abetting (and swearing frightfully at the delinquent over the process), news reached them that Heaven's vengeance had been more speedy than theirs. The

ship, driven out of her way by contrary winds and other disasters, went down off the coast of Spain, and all the passengers on board perished. This was what Philip Hamlyn had to confess now: and it was more than silly of him not to have done it before.

He touched but lightly upon it now. His tones were low, his words when he began somewhat confused: nevertheless his wife, gazing up at him with her large dark eyes, gathered an inkling of his meaning.

"Don't tell it me!" she passionately interrupted. "Do not tell me that I am only your second wife."

He went over to her, praying her to be calm, speaking of the bitter feeling of shame which had ever since clung to him.

"Did you divorce her?"

"No, no; you do not understand me, Eliza. She died before anything could be done; the ship was wrecked."

"Were there any children?" she asked in a hard whisper.

"One; a baby of a year old. He was drowned with his mother."

Mrs. Hamlyn folded her hands one over the other, and leaned back in her chair. "Why did you deceive me?"

"My will was good to deceive you for ever," he confessed with emotion. "I hate that past episode in my life; hate to think of it: I wish I could blot it out of remembrance. But for Pratt I should not have told you now."

"Oh, he said you ought to tell me?"

"He did: and blamed me for not having told you already."

"Have you any more secrets of the past that you are keeping from me?"

"None. Not one. You may take my honour upon it, Eliza. And now let us ——"

She had started forward in her chair; a red flush darkening her pale cheeks. "Philip! Philip! am I legally married? Did you describe yourself as a *bachelor* in the license?"

"No, as a widower. I got the license in London, you know."

"And no one read it?"

"No one save he who married us: Robert Grame, and I don't suppose he noticed it."

Robert Grame! The flush on Eliza's cheeks grew deeper.

"Did you *love* her?"

"I suppose I thought so when I married her. It did not take long to disenchant me," he added with a harsh laugh.

"What was her Christian name?"

"Dolly. Dora, I believe, by register. My dear wife, I have told you all. In compassion to me let us drop the subject, now and for ever."

Was Eliza Hamlyn—sitting there with pale, compressed lips, fallen eyes, and hands interlocked in pain—already beginning to reap the fruit she had sown as Eliza Monk by her rebellious marriage? Perhaps so. But not as she would have to reap it later on.

Mr. and Mrs. Hamlyn spent nearly all that year in travelling. In September they came to Peacock's Range, taking it furnished for a term of old Mr. and Mrs. Peveril, who had not yet come back to it. It stood midway, as may be remembered, between Church Leet and Church Dykely, so that Eliza was close to her old home. Late in October a little boy was born : it would be hard to say which was the prouder of him, Philip Hamlyn or his wife.

"What would you like his name to be?" Philip asked her one day.

"I should like it to be Walter," said Mrs. Hamlyn.

"*Walter!*"

"Yes, I should. I like the name for itself, but I once had a dear ttle brother named Walter, just a year younger than I. He died before we came home to England. Have you any objection to the name?"

"Oh, no, no objection," he slowly said. "I was only thinking whether you would have any. It was the name given to my first child."

"That can make no possible difference—it was not my child," was her haughty answer. So the baby was named Walter James ; the latter name also chosen by Eliza, because it had been old Mr. Monk's.

In the following spring Mr. Hamlyn had to go to the West Indies. Eliza remained at home ; and during this time she became reconciled to her father.

Hubert brought it about. For Hubert lived yet. But he was just a shadow and had to take entirely to the house, and soon to his room. Eliza came to see him, again and again ; and finally over Hubert's sofa peace was made—for Captain Monk loved her still, just as he had loved Katherine, for all her rebellion.

Hubert lingered on to the summer. And then, on a calm evening, when one of the glorious sunsets that he had so loved to look upon was illumining the western sky, opening up to his dying view, as he had once said, the very portals of Heaven, he passed peacefully away to his rest.

II.

THE next change that set in at Leet Hall concerned Miss Kate Dan cox. That wilful young pickle, somewhat sobered by the death of Hubert in the summer, soon grew unbearable again. She had completely got the upper hand of her morning governess, Miss Hum —who walked all the way from Church Dykely and back again—and of nearly everyone else ; and Captain Monk gave forth his decision one day when all was turbulence—a resident governess. Mrs. Car radyne could have danced a reel for joy, and wrote to a governess agency in London.

One morning about this time (which was already glowing with th

tints of autumn) a young lady got out of an omnibus in Oxford Street, which had brought her from a western suburb of London, paid the conductor, and then looked about her.

"There!" she exclaimed in a quaint tone of vexation, "I have to cross the street! And how am I to do it?"

Evidently she was not used to the bustle of London streets or to crossing them alone. She did it, however, after a few false starts, and so turned down a quiet side street and rang at the bell of a house in it. A slatternly girl answered the ring.

"Governess-agent—Mrs. Moffit? Oh, yes; first-floor front," said she crustily, and disappeared.

The young lady found her way upstairs alone. Mrs. Moffit sat in state in a big arm-chair, before a large table and desk, whence she daily dispensed joy or despair to her applicants. Several opened letters and copies of the daily journals lay on the table.

"Well?" cried she, laying down her pen, "what for you?"

"I am here by your appointment, madam, made with me a week ago," said the young lady. "This is Thursday."

"What name?" cried Mrs. Moffit sharply, turning over rapidly the leaves of a ledger.

"Miss West. If you remember, I ——"

"Oh, yes, child, my memory's good enough," was the tart interruption. "But with so many applicants it's impossible to be at any certainty as to faces. Registered names we can't mistake."

Mrs. Moffit read her notes—taken down a week ago. "Miss West. Educated in first-class school at Richmond; remained in it as teacher. Very good references from the ladies keeping it. Father, Colonel in India."

"But ——"

"You do not wish to go into a school again?" spoke Mrs. Moffit, closing the ledger with a snap, and peremptorily drowning what the applicant was about to say.

"Oh, dear, no, I am only leaving to better myself, as the maids say," replied the young lady smiling.

"And you wish for a good salary?"

"If I can get it. One does not care to work hard for next to nothing."

"Or else I have—let me see—two—three situations on my books. Very comfortable, I am instructed, but two of them offer ten pounds a-year, the other twelve."

The young lady drew herself slightly up with an involuntary movement. "Quite impossible, madam, that I could take any one of them."

Mrs. Moffit picked up a letter and consulted it, looking at the young lady from time to time, as if taking stock of her appearance. "I received a letter this morning from the country—a family require a well-qualified governess for their one little girl. Your testimonials

as to qualifications might suit—and you are, I believe, a gentlewoman ——"

"Oh, yes; my father was——"

"Yes, yes, I remember—I've got it down; don't worry me," impatiently spoke the oracle, cutting short the interruption. "So far you might suit: but in other respects—I hardly know what to think."

"But why?" asked the other timidly, blushing a little under the intent gaze.

"Well, you are very young, for one thing; and they might think you too good-looking."

The girl's blush grew red as a rose; she had delicate features and it made her look uncommonly pretty. A half-smile sat in her soft, dark hazel eyes.

"Surely that could not be an impediment. I am not so good-looking as all that!"

"That's as people may think," was the significant answer. "Some families will not take a pretty governess—afraid of their sons, you see. This family says nothing about looks; for aught I know there may be no sons in it. 'Thoroughly competent'—reading from the letter—'a gentlewoman by birth, of agreeable manners and lady-like. Salary, first year, to be forty pounds.'"

"And will you not recommend me?" pleaded the young governess, her voice full of soft entreaty. "Oh, please do! I know I should be found fully competent, and I promise you that I would do my very best."

"Well, there may be no harm in my writing to the lady about you," decided Mrs. Moffit, won over by the girl's gentle respect—with which she did not get treated by all her clients. "Suppose you come here again on Monday next?"

The end of the matter was that Miss West was engaged by the lady mentioned—no other than Mrs. Carradyne. And she journeyed down into Worcestershire to enter upon the situation.

But clever (and generally correct) Mrs. Moffit made one mistake, arising, no doubt, from the chronic state of hurry she was always in. "Miss West is the daughter of the late Colonel William West," she wrote, "who went to India with his regiment a few years ago, and died there." What Miss West had said to her was this: "My father, a clergyman, died when I was a little child, and my uncle William, Colonel West, the only relation I had left, died three years ago in India." Mrs. Moffit somehow confounded the two.

This might not have mattered on the whole. But, as you perceive, it conveyed a wrong impression at Leet Hall.

"The governess I have engaged is a Miss West; her father was a military man and a gentleman," spake Mrs. Carradyne one morning at breakfast to Captain Monk. "She is rather young—about twenty, I fancy; but an older person might never get on at all with Kate."

"Had good references with her, I suppose?" said the Captain.

"Oh, yes. From the agent, and especially from the ladies who have brought her up."

"Who was her father, do you say?—a military man?"

"Colonel William West," assented Mrs. Carradyne, referring to the letter she held. "He went to India with his regiment and died there."

"I'll refer to the army-list," said the Captain; "daresay it's all right. And she shall keep Kate in order, or I'll know the reason why."

The evening sunlight lay on the green plain, on the white fields from which the grain had been reaped, and on the beautiful woods glowing with the varied tints of autumn. A fly was making its way to Leet Hall, and its occupant, looking out of it on this side and that, in a fever of ecstasy, for the country scene charmed her, thought how favoured was the lot of those who could live out their lives amidst its surroundings.

In the drawing-room at the Hall, watching the approach of this same fly, stood Mrs. Hamlyn, a frown upon her haughty face. Philip Hamlyn was still detained in the West Indies, and since her reconciliation to her father, she would go over with her baby-boy to the Hall and remain there for days together. Captain Monk liked to have her, and he took more notice of the baby than he had ever taken of baby yet. For when Kate was an infant he had at first shunned her, because she had cost Katherine her life. This baby, little Walter, was a particularly forward child, strong and upright, walked at ten months old, and much resembled his mother in feature. In temper also. The young one would stand sturdily in his little blue shoes and defy his grandpapa already, and assert his own will, to the amused admiration of Captain Monk.

Eliza, utterly wrapt in her child, saw her father's growing love for him with secret delight; and one day when he had the boy on his knee, she ventured to speak out a thought that was often in her heart.

"Papa," she said, with impassioned fervour, "*he* ought to be the heir, your own grandson; not Harry Carradyne."

Captain Monk simply stared in answer.

"He lies in the *direct* succession; he has your own blood in his veins. Papa, you ought to see it."

Certainly the gallant sailor's manners were improving. For perhaps the first time in his life he suppressed the hot and abusive words rising to his tongue—that no son of that man, Hamlyn, should come into Leet Hall—and stood in silence.

"*Don't* you see it, papa?"

"Look here, Eliza: we'll drop the subject. When my brother, your uncle, was dying, he wrote me a letter, enjoining me to make Emma's son the heir, failing a son of my own. It was right it

should be so, he said. Right it is; and Harry Carradyne will succeed me. Say no more."

Thus forbidden to say more, Eliza Hamlyn thought the more, and her thoughts were not pleasant. At one time she had feared her father might promote Kate Dancox to the heirship, and grew to dislike the child accordingly. Latterly, for the same reason, she had disliked Harry Carradyne; hated him, in fact. She herself was the only remaining child of the house, and her son ought to inherit.

She stood this evening at the drawing-room window, this and other matters running in her mind. Miss Kate, at the other end of the room, had prevailed on Uncle Harry (as she called him) to play a game at toy ninepins. Or perhaps he had prevailed on her: anything to keep her tolerably quiet. She was in her teens now, but the older she grew the more troublesome she became; and she was remarkably small and childish-looking, so that strangers took her to be several years younger than she really was.

"This must be your model governess arriving, Aunt Emma," exclaimed Mrs. Hamlyn, as the fly came up the drive.

"I hope it is," said Mrs. Carradyne; and they all looked out. "Oh, yes, that's an Evesham fly—and a ramshackle thing it appears."

"I wonder you did not send the carriage to Evesham for her, mother," remarked Harry, picking up some of the ninepins which Miss Kate had swept off the table with her hand.

Mrs. Hamlyn turned round in a blaze of anger. "Send the carriage to Evesham for the governess! What absurd thing will you say next, Harry?"

The young man laughed in good humour. "Does it offend one of your prejudices, Eliza?—a thousand pardons, then. But really, nonsense apart, I can't see why the carriage should not have gone for her. We are told she is a gentlewoman. Indeed, I suppose anyone else would not be eligible, as she is to be made one of ourselves."

"And think of the nuisance it will be! Do be quiet, Harry! Kate ought to have been sent to school."

"But your father would not have her sent, you know, Eliza," spoke Mrs. Carradyne.

"Then ——"

"Miss West, ma'am," interrupted Rimmer, the butler, showing in the traveller.

"Dear me, how very young!" was Mrs. Carradyne's first thought. "And what a lovely face!"

She came in shyly. In her whole appearance there was a shrinking, timid gentleness, betokening refinement of feeling. A slender, lady-like girl, in a plain, dark travelling suit and a black bonnet lined and tied with pink, a little lace border shading her nut-brown hair. The bonnets in those days set off a pretty face better than do these modern ones. That's what the Squire tells us.

Mrs. Carradyne advanced and shook hands cordially; Eliza bent er head slightly from where she stood; Harry Carradyne stood up, pleasant welcome in his blue eyes and in his voice, as he laughingly ongratulated her upon the ancient Evesham fly not having come to rief en route. Kate Dancox pressed forward.

"Are you my new governess?"

The young lady smiled and said she believed so.

"Aunt Eliza hates governesses; so do I. Do you expect to make ie obey you?"

The governess blushed painfully; but took courage to say she oped she should. Harry Carradyne thought it the very loveliest lush he had ever seen in all his travels, and she the sweetest-looking irl.

And when Captain Monk came in he quite took to her appearance, r he hated to have ugly people about him. But every now and ien there was a look in her face, or in her eyes, that struck him being familiar—as if he had once known someone who resembled er. Pleasing, soft dark hazel eyes they were as one could wish to e, with goodness in their depths.

III.

[ONTHS passed away, and Miss West was domesticated in her new ome. It was not all sunshine. Mrs. Carradyne, ever considerate, rove to render things agreeable; but there were sources of noyance over which she had no control. Kate, when she chose, uld be verily a little elf, a demon; as Mrs. Hamlyn often put it, a diablesse." And she, that lady herself, invariably treated the verness with a sort of cool, indifferent contempt; and she was ore often at Leet Hall than away from it. The Captain, too, gave ay to fits of temper that simply terrified Miss West. Reared in the iet atmosphere of a well-trained school, she had never met with mper such as this.

On the other hand—yes, on the other hand, she had an easy ace of it, generous living, was regarded as a lady, and—she d learnt to love Harry Carradyne for weal or for woe.

But not—please take notice—not unsolicited. Tacitly, at any te. If Mr. Harry's speaking blue eyes were to be trusted and Mr. arry's tell-tale tones when with her, his love, at the very least, ualled hers. Eliza Hamlyn, despite the penetration that ill-nature nerally can exercise, had not yet scented any such treason in the nd: or there would have blown up a storm.

Spring was to bring its events; but first of all it must be said that ring the winter little Walter Hamlyn was taken ill at Leet Hall ien staying there with his mother. The malady turned out to be stric fever, and Mr. Speck was in constant attendance. For the v days that the child lay in danger, Eliza was almost wild. The

progress to convalescence was very slow, lasting many weeks; and during that time Captain Monk, being much with the little fellow, grew to be fond of him with an unreasonable affection.

"I'm not sure but I shall leave Leet Hall to him," he suddenly observed to Eliza one day, not observing that Harry Carradyne was standing in the recess of the window. "Halloa! are you there, Harry? Well, it can't be helped. You heard what I said?"

"I heard, Uncle Godfrey: but I did not understand."

"Eliza thinks Leet Hall ought to go in the direct line—through her—to this child. What should you say to that?"

"What could he say to it?" imperiously demanded Eliza. "He is only your nephew."

Harry looked from one to the other in a sort of bewildered surprise: and there came a silence.

"Uncle Godfrey," he said, starting out of a reverie, "you have been good enough to make me your heir. It was unexpected on my part, unsolicited; but you did do it, and you caused me to leave the army in consequence, to give up my fair prospects in life. I am aware that this deed is not irrevocable, and certainly you have the right to do what you will with your own property. But you must forgive me for saying that you should have made quite sure of your intentions beforehand: before picking me up, if it be only to throw me down again."

"There, there, we'll leave it," retorted Captain Monk testily. "No harm's done to you yet, Mr. Harry; I don't know that it will be."

But Harry Carradyne felt sure that it would be; that he should be despoiled of the inheritance. The resolute look of power on Eliza's face, bent on him as he quitted the chamber, was an earnest of that. Captain Monk was not the determined man he had once been; that was over.

"A pretty kettle of fish, this is," ruefully soliloquised Harry, as he marched along the corridor. "Eliza's safe to get her will; no doubt of that. And I? what am I to do? I can't repurchase and go back amongst them again like a returned shilling; at least, I won't; and I can't turn Parson, or Queen's Counsel, or Cabinet Minister. I'm fitted for nothing now, that I see, but to be a gentleman-at-large; and what would the gentleman's income be?"

Standing at the corridor window, softly whistling, he ran over ways and means in his mind. He had a pretty house of his own, Peacock's Range, formerly his father's, and about four hundred a-year. After his mother's death it would not be less than a thousand a-year.

"That means bread and cheese at present. Later—— Heyday! young lady, what's the matter?"

The school-room door, close by, had opened with a burst, and Miss Kate Dancox was flying down the stairs—her usual progress to

ninute lessons were over. Harry strolled into the room. The overness was putting the littered table straight.

"Any admission, ma'am?" cried he quaintly, making for a chair. I should like to ask leave to sit down for a bit."

Alice West laughed, and stirred the fire by way of welcome; he as a very rare visitor to the school-room. The blaze, mingling with he rays of the setting sun that streamed in at the window, played pon her sweet face and silky brown hair, lighted up the bright inter dress she wore, and the bow of pink ribbon that fastened the hite lace round her slender, pretty throat.

"Are you so much in need of a seat?" she laughingly asked.

"Indeed I am," was the semi-grave response. "I have had a shock."

"A very sharp one, sir?"

"Sharp as steel. Really and truly," he went on in a different ne, as he left the chair and stood up by the table facing her; "I ave just heard news that may affect my whole future life; may hange me from a rich man to a poor one."

"Oh, Mr. Carradyne!" Her manner had changed now.

"I was the destined inheritor, as you know—for I'm sure nobody as been reticent upon the subject—of these broad lands," with a weep of the hand towards the plains outside. "Captain Monk is ow pleased to inform me that he thinks of substituting for me Mrs. amlyn's child."

"But would not that be very unjust?"

"Hardly fair—as it seems to me. Considering that my good ncle obliged me to give up my own prospects for it."

She stood, her hands clasped in sympathy, her face full of earnest dness. "How unkind! Why, it would be cruel!"

"Well, I confess I felt it to be so at the first blow. But, standing the outside window yonder to pull myself together, a ray or two of ght crept in, showing me that it may be for the best after all. Whatever *is*, is right,' you know."

"Yes," she slowly said — "if you can think so. But, Mr. arradyne, should you not have anything at all?—anything to live on after Captain Monk's death?"

"Just a trifle, I calculate, as the Americans say—and it is lculating I have been—that I need not altogether starve. Would u like to know how much it will be?"

"Oh, please don't laugh at me!"—for it suddenly struck the girl at he was laughing, perhaps in reproof, and that she had spoken too ely. "I ought not to have asked that; I was not thinking—I was o sorry to think."

"But I may as well tell you, if you don't mind. I have a very tty little place, which you have seen and heard of, called by that lectable title Peacock's Range ——"

"Is Peacock's Range yours?" she interrupted, in surprise. "I ought it belonged to Mr. Peveril."

"Peacock's Range is mine and was my father's before me, Miss Alice. It was leased to Peveril for a term of years, but I fancy he would be glad to give it up to-morrow. Well, I have Peacock's Range and about four hundred pounds a-year."

Her face brightened. "Then you need not talk about starving," she said, gaily.

"And, later, I shall have altogether about a thousand a-year. Though I hope it will be very long before it falls to me. Do you think two people might venture to set up at Peacock's Range, and keep, say, a couple of servants upon four hundred a-year? Could they exist upon it?"

"Oh, dear, yes," she answered eagerly, quite unconscious of his drift. "Did you mean yourself and some friend?"

He nodded.

"Why, I don't see how they could spend it all. There'd be no rent to pay. And just think of all the fruit and vegetables in the garden there!"

"Then I take you at your word, Alice," he cried impulsively, passing his arm round her waist. "You are the 'friend.' My dear, I have long wanted to ask you to be my wife, and I did not dare. This place, Leet Hall, encumbered me: for I feared the opposition that I, as its heir, should inevitably meet."

She drew away from him, with doubting, frightened eyes. Mr. Harry Carradyne brought all the persuasion of his own dancing blue ones to bear upon her. "Surely, Alice, you will not say me nay!"

"I dare not say yes," she whispered.

"What are you afraid of?"

"Of it altogether; of your friends. Captain Monk would—would—perhaps—turn me out. And there's Mrs. Carradyne!"

Harry laughed. "Captain Monk can have no right to any voice in my affairs, once he throws me off; he cannot expect to have a finger in everyone's pie. As to my mother—ah, Alice, unless I am much mistaken, she will welcome you with love."

Alice burst into tears: emotion was stirring her to its depths. "*Please* to let it all be for a time," she pleaded. "If you speak it would be sure to lead to my being turned away."

"I *will* let it be for a time, my darling, so far as speaking of it goes: for more reasons than one it may be better. But you are my promised wife, Alice; always recollect that."

And Mr. Harry Carradyne, bold as a soldier should be, took a few kisses from her unresisting lips to enforce his mandate.

IV.

SOME time rolled on, calling for no particular record. Mr. Hamlyn's West Indian property, which was large and lucrative, had been giving him trouble of late; at least, those who had the care of it gave it

and he was obliged to go over occasionally to see after it in person. Between times he stayed with his wife at Peacock's Range; or else she joined him in London. Their town residence was in Bryanstone Square; a very pretty house, but not a large one.

It had been an unfavourable autumn; cold and wet. Snow had fallen in November, and the weather continued persistently dull and dreary. One gloomy afternoon towards the close of the year, Mrs. Hamlyn, shivering over her drawing-room fire, rang impatiently for more coal to be piled upon it.

"Has Master Walter come in yet?" she asked of the footman.

"No, ma'am. I saw him just now playing in front there."

She went to the window. Yes, running about the paths of the Square garden was the child, attended by his nurse. He was a sturdy little fellow. His mother, wishing to make him hardy, sent him out in all weathers, and the boy throve upon it. He was three years old now, but looked older; and he was as clever and precocious as some children are at five or six. Her heart thrilled with a strange joy only at the sight of him: he was her chief happiness in life, her idol. Whether he would succeed to Leet Hall she knew not; since the one time he mentioned it, Captain Monk had said no more upon the subject, for or against it.

Why need she have longed for it so fervently? to the setting at naught the expressed wishes of her deceased uncle and to the detriment of Harry Carradyne? It was just covetousness. As his father's eldest son (there were no younger ones yet) the boy would inherit a fine property, a large income; but his doting mother must give him Leet Hall as well.

Her whole heart went out to the child as she watched him playing there. A few snowflakes were beginning to fall, and dusk would soon be drawing on, but she would not call him in. Standing thus at the window, it gradually grew upon her to notice that something was standing back against the opposite rails, looking fixedly at the houses. A young, fair woman apparently, with a profusion of light hair; she was draped in a close dark cloak which served to conceal her figure, just as the thick veil she wore concealed her face.

"I believe it is *this* house she is gazing at so attentively—and at me," thought Mrs. Hamlyn. "What can she possibly want?"

The woman did not move away and Mrs. Hamlyn did not move; they remained staring at one another. Presently Walter burst into the room, laughing in glee at having distanced his nurse. His mother turned, caught him in her arms and kissed him passionately. Wilful though he was by disposition, and showing it at times, he was a lovable, generous child, and very pretty: great brown eyes and auburn curls. His life was all sunshine, like a butterfly's on a summer's day; his path as yet one of roses without their thorns.

"Mamma, I've got a picture-book; come and look at it," cried

the eager little voice, as he dragged his mother to the hearthrug and opened the picture-book in the light of the blaze. "Penelope bought it for me."

She sat down on a footstool, the book on her lap and one arm round him, her treasure. Penelope waited to take off his hat and pelisse, and was told to come for him in five minutes.

"It's not my tea-time yet," cried he defiantly.

"Indeed, then, Master Walter, it is long past it," said the nurse. "I couldn't get him in before, ma'am," she added to her mistress, "Every minute I kept expecting you'd be sending one of the servants after us."

"In five minutes," repeated Mrs. Hamlyn. "And what's *this* picture about, Walter? Is it a little girl with a doll?"

"Oh, dat bootiful," said the eager little lad, who was not yet as quick in speech as he was in ideas. "It says she —— dere's papa!"

In came Philip Hamlyn, tall, handsome, genial. Walter ran to him and was caught in his arms. He and his wife were just a pair for adoring the child.

But nurse, inexorable, appeared again at the five minutes' end, and Master Walter was carried off.

"You came home in a cab, Philip, did you not? I thought I heard one stop."

"Yes; it is a miserable evening. Raining fast now."

"Raining!" she repeated, rather wondering to hear it was not snowing. She went to the window to look out, and the first object her eyes caught sight of was the woman; leaning in the old place against the railings, in the growing dusk.

"I'm not sorry to see the rain; we shall have it warmer now," remarked Mr. Hamlyn, who had drawn a chair to the fire. "In fact it's much warmer already than it was this morning."

"Philip, step here a minute."

His wife's tone had dropped to a half-whisper, sounding rather mysterious, and he went at once.

"Just look, Philip—opposite. Do you see a woman standing there?"

"A woman—where?" cried he, looking of course in every direction but the right one.

"Just facing us. She has her back against the railings."

"Oh, ay, I see now; a lady in a cloak. She must be waiting for someone."

"Why do you call her a lady?"

"She looks like one—as far as I can see in the gloom. Does she not? Her hair does, any way."

"She has been there I cannot tell you how long, Philip; half-an-hour, I'm sure; and it seems to me that she is *watching* this house. A lady would hardly do that."

"This house? Oh, then, Eliza, perhaps she's watching for one

ıe servants. She might come in, poor thing, instead of standing ıere in the rain."

"Poor thing, indeed!—what business has any woman to watch a ouse in this marked manner?" retorted Eliza. "The neighbourood will be taking her for a female detective."

"Nonsense!"

"She has given me a creepy feeling; I can tell you that, Philip."

"But why?" he exclaimed.

"I can't tell you why; I don't know why; it is so. Do not laugh me for confessing it."

Philip Hamlyn did laugh; heartily. "Creepy feelings" and his aperiously strong-minded wife could have but little affinity with one ıother.

"We'll have the curtains drawn, and the lights, and shut her out," ıid he cheerily. "Come and sit down, Eliza; I want to show you letter I've had to-day."

But the woman waiting outside there seemed to possess for Eliza Hamlyn somewhat of the fascination of the basilisk; for she never ırred from the window until the curtains were drawn.

"It is from Peveril," said Mr. Hamlyn, producing the letter he had ɔoken of from his pocket. "The lease he took of Peacock's Range not yet out, but he can resign it now if he pleases, and he would e glad to do so. He and his wife would rather remain abroad, it ems, than return home."

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, he writes to me to ask whether he can resign it; or hether I must hold him to the promise he made me—that I should nt the house to the end of the term. I mean the end of the lease; e term he holds it for."

"Why does he want to resign it? Why can't things go on as at esent?"

"I gather from an allusion he makes, though he does not explicitly ate it, that Mr. Carradyne wishes to have the place in his own nds. What am I to say to Peveril, Eliza?"

"Say! Why, that you must hold him to his promise; that we nnot give up the house yet. A pretty thing if I had no place to down to at will in my own county!"

"So far as I am concerned, Eliza, I would prefer to stay away ɔm the county—if your father is to continue to treat me in the way does. Remember what it was in the summer. I think we are ry well here."

"Now, Philip, I have *said*. I do not intend to release our hold on acock's Range. My father will be reconciled to you in time as he to me."

"I wonder what Harry Carradyne can want it for?" mused Philip amlyn, bowing to the imperative decision of his better half.

"To live in it, I should say. He would like to show his resentment

to papa by turning his back on Leet Hall. It can't be for anything else."

"What cause of resentment has he? He sent for him home and made him his heir."

"*That* is the cause. Papa has come to his senses and changed his mind. It is our darling little Walter who is to be the heir o Leet Hall, Philip—and papa has so informed Harry Carradyne."

Philip Hamlyn gazed at his wife in doubt. He had never hear a word of this; instinct had kept her silent.

"I hope not," he emphatically said, breaking the silence.

"*You hope not?*"

"Walter shall never inherit Leet Hall with my consent, Eliza Harry Carradyne is the right and proper heir, and no child of mine as I hope, must or shall displace him."

Mrs. Hamlyn treated her husband to one of her worst looks telling of contempt as well as of power; but she did not speak.

"Listen, Eliza. I cannot bear injustice, and I do not believe i ever prospers in the long run. Were your father to bequeath—m dear, I beg of you to listen to me!—to bequeath his estates to littl Walter, to the exclusion of the true heir, rely upon it the beques would *never bring him good.* In some way or other it would no serve him. Money diverted by injustice from its natural and jus channel does not carry a blessing with it. I have noted this ove and over again in going through life."

"Anything more?" she contemptuously asked.

"And Walter will not need it," he continued persuasively, passin her question as unheard. "As my son, he will be amply provided for.

A very commonplace interruption occurred, and the subject wa dropped. Nothing more than a servant bringing in a letter for h master, just come by hand.

"Why, it is from old Richard Pratt!" exclaimed Mr. Hamlyn, a he turned to the light.

"I thought Major Pratt never wrote letters," she remarked. " once heard you say he must have forgotten how to write."

He did not answer. He was reading the note, which appeared t be a short one. She watched him. After reading it through he bega it again, a puzzled look upon his face. Then she saw it flush all ove and he crushed the note into his pocket.

"What is it about, Philip?"

"Pratt wants a prescription for gout that I told him of. I'm su I don't know whether I can find it."

He had answered in a dreamy tone with thoughts preoccupie and quitted the room hastily, as if to search for it.

Eliza wondered why he should flush up at being asked for a pr scription, and why he should have suddenly lost himself in a reveri But she had not much curiosity as to anything that concerned o Major Pratt—who was at present staying in lodgings in London.

Downstairs went Mr. Hamlyn to the little room he called his library, seated himself at the table under the lamp, and opened the note again. It ran as follows :

"DEAR PHILIP HAMLYN,—The other day, when calling here, you spoke of some infallible prescription to cure gout that had been given you. I've symptoms of it flying about me—and be hanged to it! Bring it to me yourself to-morrow; I want to see you. *I suppose there was no mistake in the report that that ship did go down?* —and that none of the passengers were saved from it?

"Truly yours,
"RICHARD PRATT."

"What can he possibly mean?" muttered Philip Hamlyn.

But there was no one to answer the question, and he sat buried in thought, trying to answer it himself. Starting up from the useless task, he looked in his desk, found the infallible prescription, and then snatched his watch from his pocket.

"Too late," he decided impatiently; "Pratt would be gone to bed. He goes at all kinds of unearthly hours when out of sorts." So he went upstairs to his wife again, the prescription displayed in his hand.

Morning came, bringing the daily routine of duties in its train. Mrs. Hamlyn had made an engagement to go with some friends to Blackheath, to take luncheon with a lady living there. It was damp and raw in the early portion of the day, but promised to be clear later on.

"And then my little darling can go out to play again," she said, hugging the child to her. "In the afternoon, nurse; it will be drier then; it is really too damp this morning."

Parting from him with fifty kisses, she went down to her comfortable and handsome carriage, her husband placing her in.

"I wish you were coming with me, Philip! But, you see, it is only ladies to-day. Six of us."

Philip Hamlyn laughed. "I don't wish it at all," he answered; they would be fighting for me. Besides, I must take old Pratt his prescription. Only picture his storm of anger if I did not."

Mrs. Hamlyn was not back until just before dinner: her husband, he heard, had been out all day, and was not yet in. Waiting for him in the drawing-room listlessly enough, she walked to the window to look out. And there she saw with a sort of shock the same woman standing in the same place as the previous evening. Not once all day long had she thought of her.

"This is a strange thing!" she exclaimed. "I am *sure* it is this house that she is watching."

On the impulse of the moment she rang the bell and called the man who answered it to the window. He was a faithful, attached servant, had lived with them ever since they were married, and previously to that in Mr. Hamlyn's family in the West Indies.

"Japhet," said his mistress, "do you see that woman opposite? Do you know why she stands there?"

Japhet's answer told nothing. They had all seen her downstairs, yesterday evening as well as this, and wondered what she could be watching the house for.

"She is not waiting for any of the servants, then; not an acquaintance of theirs?"

"No, ma'am, that I'm sure she's not. She is a stranger to us all."

"Then, Japhet, I think you shall go over and question her," spoke his mistress impulsively. "Ask her who she is and what she wants. And tell her that a gentleman's house cannot be watched with impunity in this country—and she will do well to move away before the police are called to her."

Japhet looked at his mistress and hesitated; he was an elderly man and cautious. "I beg your pardon, madam," he began, "for venturing to say as much, but I think it might be best to let her alone. She'll grow tired of stopping there. And if her motive is to attract pity, and get alms sent out, why the fact of speaking to her might make her bold enough to ask for them. If she comes there to-morrow again, it might be best for the master to take it up himself."

For once in her life Mrs. Hamlyn condescended to listen to the opinion of an inferior, and Japhet was dismissed without orders. Close upon that, a cab came rattling down the square, and stopped at the door. Her husband leaped out of it, tossed the driver his fare—he always paid liberally—and let himself in with his latch-key. To Mrs. Hamlyn's astonishment she had seen the woman dart from her standing-place to the middle of the road, evidently to look at or to accost Mr. Hamlyn. But his movements were too quick: he was within in a moment and had closed the outer door. She then walked rapidly away, and disappeared.

Eliza Hamlyn stood there lost in thought. The nurse came in to take the child; Mr. Hamlyn had gone to his room to dress for dinner.

"Have you seen the woman who has been standing out there yesterday evening and this, Penelope?" she asked of the nurse, speaking upon impulse.

"Oh, yes, ma'am. She has been there all the blessed afternoon. She came into the garden to talk to us."

"Came into the garden to talk to you?" repeated Mrs. Hamlyn. "What did she talk about?"

"Chiefly about Master Walter, ma'am. She seemed to be much taken with him; she clasped him in her arms and kissed him, and said how old was he, and was he difficult to manage, and that he had his father's beautiful brown eyes ——"

Penelope stopped abruptly. Mistaking the hard stare her mistress was unconsciously giving her for one of displeasure, she hastened to excuse herself. The fact was, Mrs. Hamlyn's imagination was beginning to run riot.

"I couldn't help her speaking to me, ma'am, or her kissing the child; she took me by surprise. That was all she said—except that she asked whether you were likely to be going into the country soon, away from the house here. She didn't stay five minutes with us, but went back to stand by the railings again."

"Did she speak as a lady or as a common person?" quite fiercely demanded Mrs. Hamlyn. "Is she young?—good-looking?"

"Oh, I think she is a lady," replied the girl, her accent decisive. "And she's young, as far as I could see, but she had a thick veil over her face. Her hair is lovely, just like silken threads of pale gold," concluded Penelope as Mr. Hamlyn's step was heard.

He took his wife into the dining-room, apologising for being late. She, giving full range to the fancies she had called up, heard him in silence with a hardening, haughty face.

"Philip, you know who that woman is," she suddenly exclaimed during a temporary absence of Japhet from the dining-room. "What is it that she wants with you?"

"I!" he returned, in a surprise very well feigned if not real. "What woman? Do you mean the one who was standing out there yesterday?"

"You know I do. She has been there again—all the blessed afternoon, as Penelope expresses it. Asking questions of the girl about you—and me—and Walter; and saying the child has your beautiful brown eyes. *I ask you who is she?*"

Mr. Hamlyn laid down his knife and fork to gaze at his wife. He looked quite at sea.

"Eliza, I assure you I know nothing about it. Or about her."

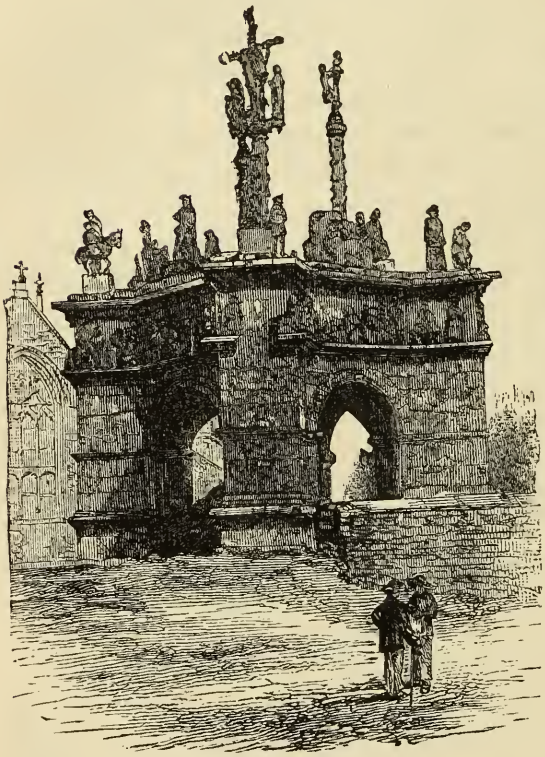
"Indeed! Don't you think it may be some acquaintance, old or new? Possibly someone you knew in the days gone by — come over seas to see whether you are yet in the land of the living? She has wonderful hair, which looks like spun gold."

All in a moment, as the half-mocking words left her lips, some idea seemed to flash across Philip Hamlyn, bringing with it distress and fear. His face turned to a burning red and then grew white as the hue of the grave.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THE BRETONS AT HOME.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.



A Breton Calvary.

AMONGST the many advantages possessed by Morlaix may be mentioned the fact of its being a central point from which a number of interesting excursions may be made. It is one of the chief towns of the Finistère, a Department crowded with churches, and here will be found at once some of the best and worst examples of ecclesiastical architecture in Brittany.

Of the churches of Morlaix we have said nothing. Interesting and delightful as it is in its old houses, it fails in its churches. Those worthy of note were destroyed at the Revolution, that social scourge which passed like a blight over the whole country, leaving its traces behind it for ever.

The church of St. Melaine is the only one deserving a passing notice. It is in the third Pointed style, and, built on an eminence, is approached by a somewhat imposing flight of steps. A narrow thoroughfare leads up to it, and the nearer houses are inhabited by the priests and other members of the religious community.

The porch and windows are Flamboyant, and a little of the stained glass is good. The interior is divided into three naves by wooden partitions, consisting of pillars without capitals supporting pointed arches. The wall-plates represent monks in grotesque attitudes: portraits, perhaps, of those who inhabited the Priory of St. Melaine of Rennes, to which the church originally belonged. The basin for holy water between the porches has a very interesting cover; but still more remarkable is the cover to the font, an imposing and elegantly sculptured octagonal work of art of the Renaissance period, raised and lowered by means of pulleys. The organ case is also good; and

having said so much, there is nothing left to record in favour of St. Melaine. The general effect of the church is poor and mean, and the most vivid impression left upon the mind is that caused by the sharp climb up the narrow street and flight of steps, with little reward beyond one's trouble for the pains of mounting.

But other churches in the neighbourhood of Morlaix are well worth visiting; churches typical of the Finistère, with their wonderful calvaries, mortuaries and triumphal arches.

"These," said Monsieur Hellard, our host of the Hôtel d'Europe, who had, by this time, fully atoned for the transgressions of that one and almost fatal night—"these must on no account be neglected. Morlaix, more than any other town in the Finistère, as it seems to me, is surrounded by objects of intense interest; monuments of antiquity, both secular and religious."

"Yet you are not the chief town of the Finistère," we observed.

"True," he replied; "Quimper is our chief town; we are only second in rank; but in many ways we are more interesting than Quimper."

"You are partial," cried H. C., but very amiably. "What about Quimper's wonderful cathedral? Where can you match that architectural dream in Morlaix?"

"There, indeed, I give in," returned our host, meekly. "Morlaix has nothing to boast of in the way of churches, thanks to the revolution. But in the neighbourhood, each within the limits of a day's excursion, we have St. Thégonnec, Guimiliau, St. Jean-du-Doigt—and last and greatest of all—Le Folgoët. Besides these, we have a host of minor but interesting excursions."

"The minor must be left to the future," we replied; "for the present we must confine ourselves to the major monuments."

"One can't do everything," chimed in Madame Hellard, who came up at the moment. "I never recommend small excursions unless you are making a long stay in the neighbourhood. It becomes too tiring. We had a charming English family with us last year; a milord, very rich—they are all rich—with a sweetly amiable wife, who made herself in the hotel quite one of ourselves, and would chatter with us in my bureau by the hour together. Mon cher"—to her husband—"do you remember how they enjoyed the regatta, and seeing all the natives turn out in their Sunday clothes; and how Madame laughed at the old women who fried the pancakes upon their knees in the open air; and the boys and girls who took them up hot and buttery in their fingers and devoured them like savages? Do you remember?"

Monsieur Hellard apparently did remember, and shook with laughter at the recollection of that or of something equally droll.

"I shall never forget Madame's look of astonishment," he cried, "as the pancakes were turned out of the poële, and disappeared wholesale like lightning." 'Ah, madame,' I said, 'you have yet

to learn the capacious appetites of our Breton boys and girls. It is one of the few things in which they are not slow and phlegmatic.'

"'And have not improved in,' laughed Madame. 'These habits are the remains of barbarism.'

"'Madame,' I replied, 'you must not forget that we are descended from the Ancient Britons.' Ah! that was a clencher. Madame laughed, but she said no more."

"Until she returned," added our hostess. "Then she whispered to me: 'Madame Hellard, those pancakes looked extremely good, and as they are peculiar to Brittany, you must give us some for dinner. I must taste your *crêpes*.'

"'Madame la Comtesse,' I returned, 'Brittany has many peculiarities; we cannot deny it; would that they were all as innocent as these crêpes. My chef is not a Breton, and he will not make them, perhaps, quite à la manière des nôtres; but I will superintend him for once. You shall have our famous dish.' And if you wish to know how she liked them," concluded Madame, laughing, "ask Catherine, là-haut. Three times a week at least we had pancakes on the menu. But nothing delights us more than when we please our guests. We like them to be at home here, and to feel that they may do as they please and order what they like."

To the truth of which self-commendation we bore good testimony.

"Now about the excursions," said M. Hellard. "I recommend you to go to-morrow to St. Thégonnec and Guimiliau, the next day to St. Jean-du-Doigt and Plougasnou, and the third day to Landerneau and Le Folgoët. The two first by carriage, the last by train."

So it was arranged, and we were about to separate when in came our hostess of that little auberge by the river-side, *A la halte des Pêcheurs*, carrying a barrel of oysters. She had walked all the way, and though the sun shone brilliantly, she was armed with a huge cotton umbrella that would have roofed a fair-sized tent.

"Madame Mirmiton!" cried M. Hellard; "and with a barrel of oysters, too! You are welcome as fine weather at the *Fête-Dieu!* But why you and not your husband?"

"Ah, monsieur!" replied Madame Mirmiton: "Figurez-vous, my husband was running after that naughty girl of mine, stumbled over the cat and sprained his ankle. He will be quite a week getting well again."

"And the cat?" asked our host, comically.

"Pauvre Minette!" answered Madame Mirmiton, with tears in her voice. "She flew up the chimney. We have never seen her since—two days ago."

"Well, whether you or your bon homme bring them, these oysters are equally à propos. I am sure ces messieurs will enjoy our native for déjeuner. I have it!" he cried, striking his forehead. "You shall have an early déjeuner, and start immediately after for St. Thégonnec instead of delaying it until to-morrow. You will have plenty of time

and must profit by the fine weather. I will order déjeuner at once, and the carriage in an hour."

So are there times when our days, and occasionally the whole course of our lives, are apparently changed by the turning of a straw.

Having mentioned the oysters, we ought also to record their excellence. Catherine flew about the salle à manger, served us with her own hands, and gave us her whole attention, for we had the room to ourselves. She was proud of our praise.

"There is nothing better than our lobsters and oysters," she remarked. "I always say so, and Mirmiton always brings us the best of the good. But to-day it was Madame who came in. Ah! *the Cat!*" laughing satirically. "The cat comes in for everything, everywhere. She is a domestic animal invented for two reasons: to catch mice and to furnish an excuse for whatever happens. I dare affirm it was a glass too much and not the cat that caused the bon homme to sprain his ankle."

But we who had heard Madame Mirmiton's chapter and verse, were of a different opinion. Every rule has an exception, and the cat is certainly in fault—sometimes.

We started for St. Thégonnec. Monsieur packed us into the victoria, a heavy vehicle well matched by the horse and the man. We should certainly not fly on the wings of the wind.

"Take umbrellas," cried Madame Hellard, prudently, from the doorway. "Remember your drenching that day, and what fatal consequences *might* have happened."

But we saw no necessity for umbrellas to-day, for there was not a cloud in the sky.

"Still, to please you, I will take my macintosh," said H. C.; "it is hanging up in the hall."

But the macintosh had disappeared. A traveller who had left by the last train had good-naturedly appropriated it to his own use and service. It was that admirable macintosh that has already adorned these pages, with the cape finished off with fish-hooks for carrying old china, brown paper parcels and headless images; and as the invention was not yet patented, the loss was serious. H. C. lamented openly.

"I only hope," he said, "that the man who has taken it will put it on inside out, and that all the fish-hooks will stick into him." The most revengeful saying his gentle mind had ever uttered.

"C'est encore le chat!" screamed Catherine, who was leaning out of a first-floor window of the salle à manger, quite undaunted by Madame Hellard's reproving "Voyons, voyons, Catherine!"

But Catherine was loyal, for all her mild sarcasm, and we knew that if ever the delinquent turned up again he would have a mauvais quart d'heure at her hands, whilst M. Hellard would certainly enforce restitution.

Some months later on, at a subsequent visit we paid to Morlaix, we asked after the fate of the macintosh and its borrower.

"Ah, monsieur," cried our host, sadly, "his punishment was even greater than we could have wished; two months afterwards the poor fellow died of la grippe."

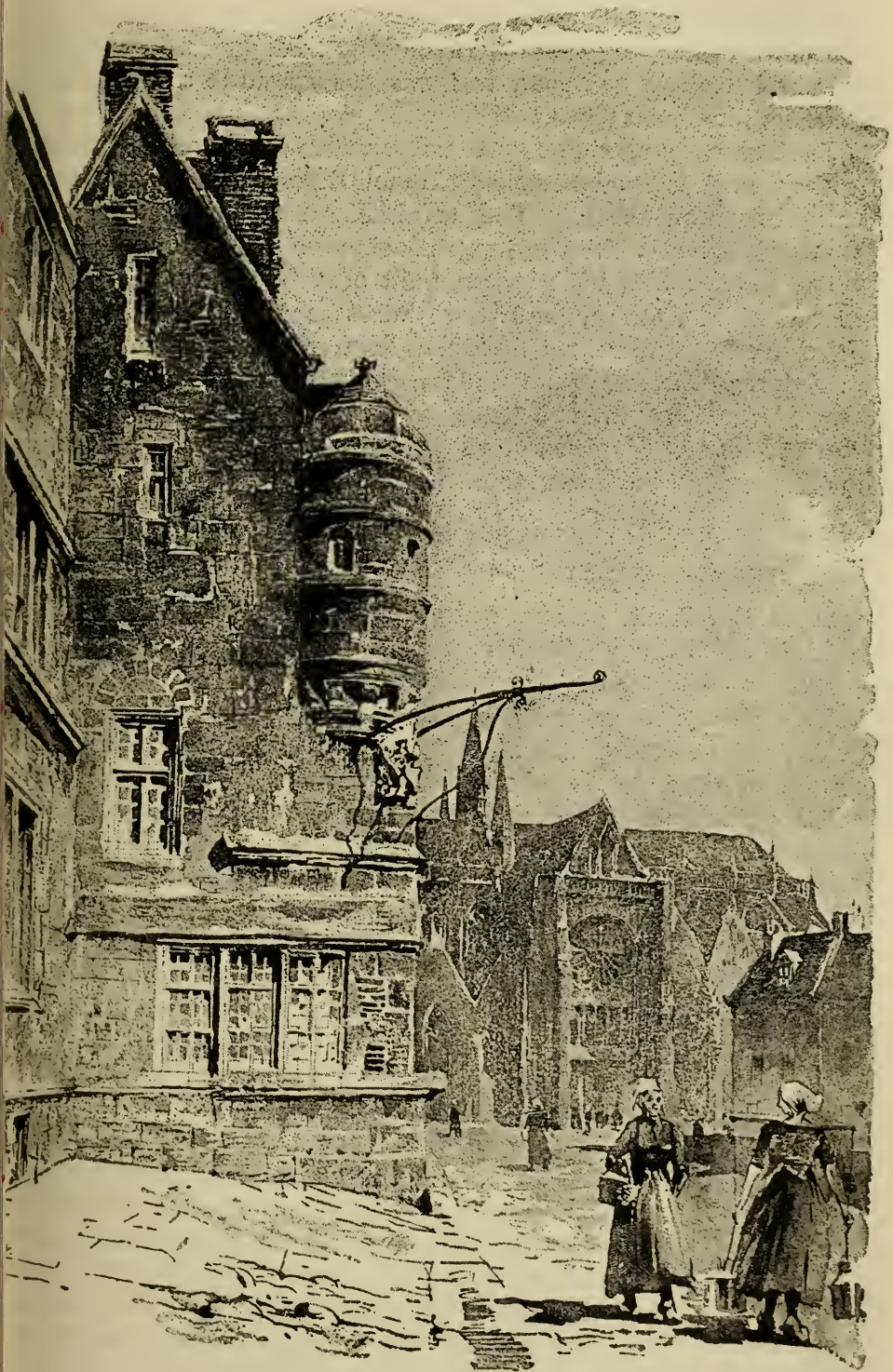
But to return. We started for St. Thégonnec. It was a longish drive; the road undulated a good deal, and the horse seemed to think that whether going up hill or down a funereal pace was the correct thing. It took us half our time to rouse our sleepy driver to a sense of his duty. At last we tried a severe threat. "If you are not back again by table d'hôte time, you shall have no pourboire," we said, in solemn and determined tones. The effect was excellent. We had no more trouble, but the unfortunate horse had a great deal of whip.

There was very little to notice in the country we passed through. The most conspicuous objects were the large stone crucifixes erected here and there by the roadside or where two roads met: ancient and beautiful; and throwing, as we have remarked, a religious tone and atmosphere over the country. It was wonderfully picturesque to see, as we occasionally did, a Brittany peasant kneeling at the foot of one of these old crosses, the pure white Brittany cap standing out conspicuously against the dark grey stone: a figure wrapped in devotion, apparently lost to the sense of all outward things. It all adds a charm to one's wanderings in Brittany.

St. Thégonnec at last, announced some time before we reached it by its remarkable church, which is very visible in the flatness of the surrounding country. The small town numbers some three thousand inhabitants, but has almost the primitive look of a village. Many of the people still wear the costumes of the place, especially on a Sunday, when the interior of the church at high mass looks very picturesque and imposing.

The dress of the women is peculiar, and at first sight they might almost be taken for nuns or sisters of mercy: a dress which leaves scope for a certain refinement rather contradicted by the physical appearance of the women themselves. Men and women, in fact, belong for the most part to the peasantry, and pass their simple lives labouring in the fields, beating out flax, cultivating their little gardens, so that such an official as the gravedigger becomes an important personage amongst them. We came across him, at his melancholy work, but could make no more of him than we made of the people of Roscoff. He understood no word of French, but spoke his own native tongue, the language of la Bretagne Bretonnante, as Froissart has it, in contradistinction to la Bretagne douce. Nothing, certainly, can be softer and more beautiful than the pure French language; but that of Brittany is hard and guttural, without beauty or refinement of any sort.

The men of St. Thégonnec dress very differently from the women, but the costume is also very characteristic. It is entirely black, and consists of wide breeches, pleated and strapped at the knee; a



Old House, St. Pol de Léon.

square tunic; a scarf tied round the waist, with loose ends; a large hat, and shoes with buckles.

To-day few inhabitants were visible. We seemed to be in possession of the place, together with the old gravedigger, who stopped his work and escorted us about, but was too stupid to understand even the most intelligent signs.

The church is very elaborate and fanciful, cruciform and sixteenth century, in the Renaissance style, much decorated with sculptures in dark Kersanton stone. The word *Kersanton* is Breton for St. Anthony's House; therefore we may suppose that the Saint had his house, and possibly his pig-stye, built of this same stone. For, as we know, St. Anthony had a weakness for pigs, and was famous for recovering one of his favourites from the devil, who had stolen it: recovered it not quite undamaged, as the animal was restored with his tail on fire: a base return for the Saint's politeness, who had offered his petition in poetical terms to which his audience could scarcely have been accustomed.

> "Rendez-moi mon cochon, s'il-vous-plait,
> Il faisait toute ma félicité,"

chanted the Saint, and to restore the pig with his tail on fire was conduct worthy only of fallen spirits.

But let us leave the Saint's pigs and return to our sheep.

The Kersanton stone, of which so many churches in Brittany are built, possesses many virtues, but one great drawback. It defies the ravages of time, yet is admirable for carving, yielding easily to the chisel. But time has no influence upon it. Centuries pass, yet still it remains the same: ever youthful, ever hard and cold. It knows nothing of the beauty of age; it does not crumble or decay, or wear away into softened outlines; it takes no charm of tone; no light and shadows. A dark grey-green it was originally, and so it remains. Thus, in point of effect, a church built of Kersanton stone two centuries ago might, as far as appearance goes, almost have been built yesterday. This is a great defect; and interferes very much with the charm of some of Brittany's best churches. It is hard, cold and severe, without refinement, poetry or romance.

In some cases it atones somewhat by its richness and elaborateness of sculpture, as in the case of St. Thégonnec. The west front of this church is Gothic, of the fourteenth century. One of the turrets has a small, elegant spire, and at the S.W. angle there is a very effective domed tower bearing the date 1605.

You enter the churchyard by a triumphal arch, in Renaissance, dated 1587. It is large and massive, with a great amount of detail substantially introduced, its summit crowned by a number of crosses. On the frieze St. Thégonnec is represented conducting a waggon drawn by an ox: a facsimile of the waggon that is said to have assisted in carrying the stone to build the church. St. Thégonnec

the patron saint of all animals, and to him the peasants appeal r success and good-luck in such matters.

Adjoining the triumphal arch is a Flamboyant ossuary or ortuary chapel, dated 1581, richly gabled, in perfect preservation, id of two storeys. The first consists of semicircular arches pported by small pillars with Corinthian capitals. A short stair- se within leads to a crypt converted into a small chapel, in which an entombment formed of life-size figures carved in wood, gilded id painted, bearing date 1702. The calvary in the churchyard, a markable monument, completes the history, by a multitude of nall statues representing all the principal episodes of the Passion. s date is 1610. Even the crosses are surmounted by statuettes, as the designer had not known how to heap up sufficient richness of namentation. The carved pulpit in the interior of the church is so remarkable.

We could only devote an hour to St. Thégonnec; Guimiliau had ill to be seen, and we wished to be back in Morlaix by a certain ne, for "the night cometh." Fortunately the drive was not a long one. Guimiliau is a village not half the size of St. Thégonnec, and is en less civilized. Into the inn, which no doubt is respectable, but as rough and primitive, we did not venture. The driver and the ndlord were apparently on excellent terms, and whilst they aternised over their glasses, we inspected the church.

The place takes its name from Miliau, a king of the Cornouaille, ho was treacherously murdered by his brother Rivod, who then oclaimed himself king about the year 531. The church and the ople canonised him, and he has become the patron saint of many Breton village.

The church of Guimiliau dates chiefly from the sixteenth century. he aisles and the south porch are Renaissance, richly ornamented delicate sculptures representing scenes from the Old and New estament; statues of the Apostles. The triumphal arch and suary are very inferior to St. Thégonnec, but the calvary is a mag- ficent monument, unequalled in Brittany, richly sculptured and namented. It rests on five arches, and you ascend to the platform a short staircase in the interior. Here are crosses bearing the viour, and the thieves, quaintly carved, but with a great deal of igious feeling. The Evangelists, each with his particular attribute rtrayed, are placed at the angles: and the whole history of the fe of Christ is represented by a countless number of small figures personages dressed in costumes of the sixteenth century. The effect occasionally grotesque, but very wonderful. A procession armed th drums and other instruments precedes the *Bearing of the Cross;* d another scene which does not belong to the Divine Life, but was roduced as an accessory, represents Catel Gollet (the lost Catherine) ecipitated by devils in the form of grotesques into the jaws of a ry dragon emblematical of Purgatory.

Catel Gollet was one who concealed a sin in confession, was condemned to suffer, and returning miraculously in 1560 announced her condemnation to her companions in these terms :

> Voici ma main, cause de mon malheur,
> Et voici ma langue détestable !
> Ma main qui a fait le péché,
> Et ma langue qui l'a nié.

The bas-relief represents the Adoration of the Magi, and bears date 1588, whilst the upper part bears that of 1581.

The interior of the church possesses some wonderful and almost matchless carved wood, which surprised and delighted us. There were sixteenth century statues, full of expression, of St. Hervé and St. Miliau; an elaborate and beautiful pulpit, a font with a canopy supported by twisted columns, magnificently carved and thirty feet high, dated 1675; a matchless organ case, with three bas-reliefs, representing David, St. Cecilia and a Triumphal March, the latter reproduced from one of Alexander's battles by Lebrun.

In short, Guimiliau was a treasury of sculptured wood, which alone would have made it remarkable amongst churches. It was almost impossible to leave its fascination, and I fear that we more than envied the church its possession. It also came with a surprise, for we had heard nothing of this treasure of refined carving, and had anticipated nothing more than the wonderful calvary. It still lives in our imagination, almost as a dream; a dream of beauty and genius.

We lingered as long as we dared, but knew that we should not travel back at express speed, and that our coachman, after his indulgence in Breton beer or spirit, would probably be more sleepy than ever.

The sun was declining as we left Guimiliau, the church and its monuments forming a very singular composition against the background of the sky as we turned and gave it a farewell look. One scarcely analysed the reason, but there was almost an effect of heathendom about it, as if it dated from some remote age, when visible objects were worshipped, and the sun and the moon and dragons and grotesques took a prominent place in religion.

The sun was declining and twilight was beginning to creep over the land. It threw out in greater relief the wayside crosses that we passed on the road, solemnising the scene, and insensibly leading the mind to contemplation; all the beauty, all the mystery of our faith, the lights and shadows of our earthly pilgrimage, so typified by the days and nights of creation; and the "one far-off divine event" which concerns us all.

When we entered Morlaix the sun had set; table d'hôte was not over, and we knew that Catherine had our places and our welfare in her special keeping; and the driver having done his best on the road and having fallen asleep not more than five times on his box, we

BRITTANY PEASANTS.

forgot our threat, and dismissed him with a *pourboire*, for which he returned us a Breton benediction.

Once again the next day was kindly, the sun shone, the sky was unclouded. These are rare days in Brittany, which, surrounded on three sides by water, lives in an atmosphere that is always damp and too often gloomy and depressing.

Mindful of our host's wise counsel to profit by the fine weather, we started for St. Jean-du-Doigt.

This time our drive lay in a different direction. Yesterday it had been inland, to-day it was towards the sea-coast. The country for some time was sad and barren-looking, but as we approached St. Jean and the coast it became more interesting and fertile.

Lanmeur, a small town not far from St. Jean, lies in a rather sad and solitary plain, and is said to occupy the site of a city of great antiquity. Here runs the river Douron, a small stream that, considerably higher up, separates the Department of Finistère from Les Côtes du Nord. The ancient city was named *Kerfeunteun*, and possessed a wonderful church which was destroyed by the Normans in the eleventh century, but of which the crypt still remains. In the centre of this crypt springs a fountain or well, dedicated to St. Melar, a Breton prince put to death in the year 538, by that same Rivod who murdered his brother Miliau, and then had himself proclaimed king. The crypt also contains a statue of St. Melar of the fourteenth century, representing him minus a hand and foot, which Rivod had had cut off before putting him to death, in order that he should not be able to mount a horse or use a sword. Of the church built in the eleventh century only a few arches in the nave and the south porch remain. The rest of the existing building is modern.

The coast beyond Lanmeur is extremely broken, rugged and rocky, full of small bays and sharp points of land jutting out into the sea. The whole neighbourhood is interesting. Especially remarkable are the Pointe de Beg an Fri, the fine and rugged rocks of Primel and of Plougasnou ; whilst on the land the pointed roofs of many an old manor rise above the trees.

St. Jean-du-Doigt is four miles from all this. It is a very pretty and fertile village watered by the Dounant, which passes through it on its way to the Bay of St. Jean, where it loses itself in the sea.

The village lies between two high and barren hills, which shelter it from the cold winds, and make the valley laughing and fertile. Here you find well-grown elm trees, and hedges full of the whitethorn, honeysuckle and wild vines ; hedges surrounding rich and productive orchards, amongst which, here and there, you will see rising the thatched roof of the small cottages inhabited by the Breton peasantry.

As at Roscoff, so the moment we reached St. Jean du Doigt, we felt its fascination. Its situation between the hills is extremely picturesque. Approaching, its rich gateway, leading to the churchyard, stands before you with fine effect ; and beyond it rises the church.

The gateway is Flamboyant gothic, of great beauty and refinement. The church is fifteenth century gothic. Its wooden roof is beautifully carved and painted. The interior has no transept, but is composed of three naves under one roof. The west aisle has been shortened to make room for the tower; and in the north nave is a closed-up pointed doorway, which must have belonged to the earlier chapel dedicated to St. Mériadec. The apsis is terminated by a straight wall. The three naves are separated below the choir by prismatic pillars supporting light and bold arches.

The tower is pierced on the four sides by two long, narrow lancet windows, ending in a platform bearing a Flamboyant balustrade, above which rise four bell-turrets in lead, supporting a tall leaden spire.

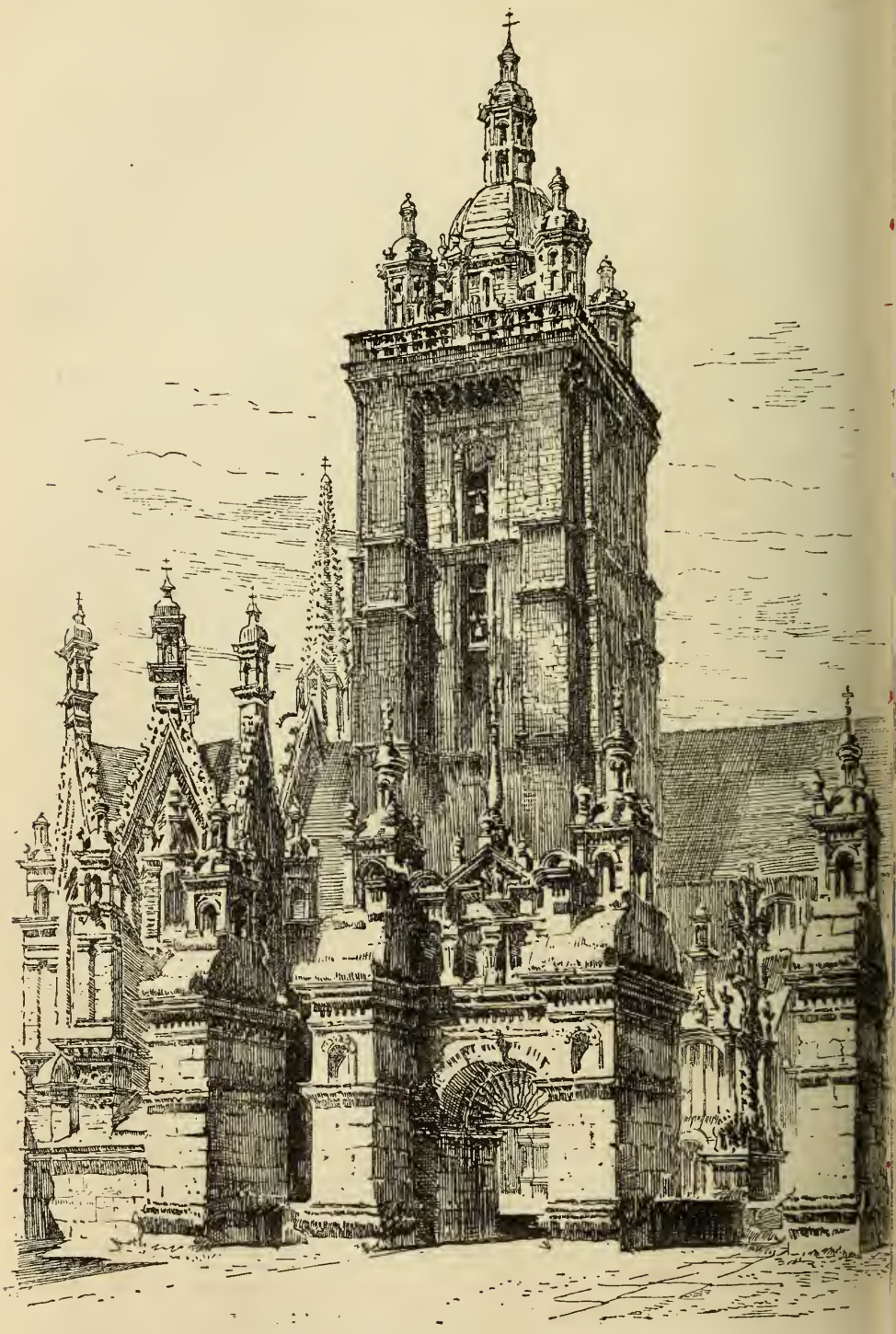
The churchyard contains two remarkable objects: a mortuary chapel of the date 1577, open on three sides, with a stone altar at the end. The other is an exquisite Renaissance fountain of lead, with admirable figures, the goal of many a pilgrimage. It is a rare work of art, composed of three trenchers or shallow basins united by a slender column, of which the base enters a large reservoir in the form of a basin resting on a pedestal, the water issuing from lions' mouths. The overflow from the upper basins is discharged into the larger basins below by means of a cordon or garland, consisting of angels' heads, full of grace and beauty. The summit of the fountain is crowned by an image of the FATHER ETERNAL, leaning forward to watch the Baptism of the SON by John the Baptist. These figures are all in lead, as also are the innumerable heads of the angels pouring out water from the three upper stages. The exquisite composition is said to have been the work of an Italian artist, and was given by Anne of Brittany.

The whole village scene is picturesque and striking. You feel at home at once; it is marked by a certain refinement, a delicious quietness and repose in which there is something singularly soothing. Lying in a hollow, it seems to have carefully withdrawn from the outer world. It is warm and sunny, and marked and beautified by a wealth of flowers. Surrounding the churchyard are some of the small houses of this mediæval village.

The inn opposite the gothic gateway looks the very picture of cleanliness and quiet comfort. Through an open window you see a table spread with a snow-white cloth, a capital ensign for an inn, promising much that is loyal. The whole of the exterior is a wealth of blossom, roses and wisteria covering the white walls, framing the casements, overflowing to the roof.

On the churchyard walls sat some of the village girls knitting; and as we took them with our instantaneous cameras, some rushed hastily across the road and disappeared in the small houses; whilst others, made of bolder material, placed themselves in becoming attitudes, and looked the very image of conscious vanity. The men

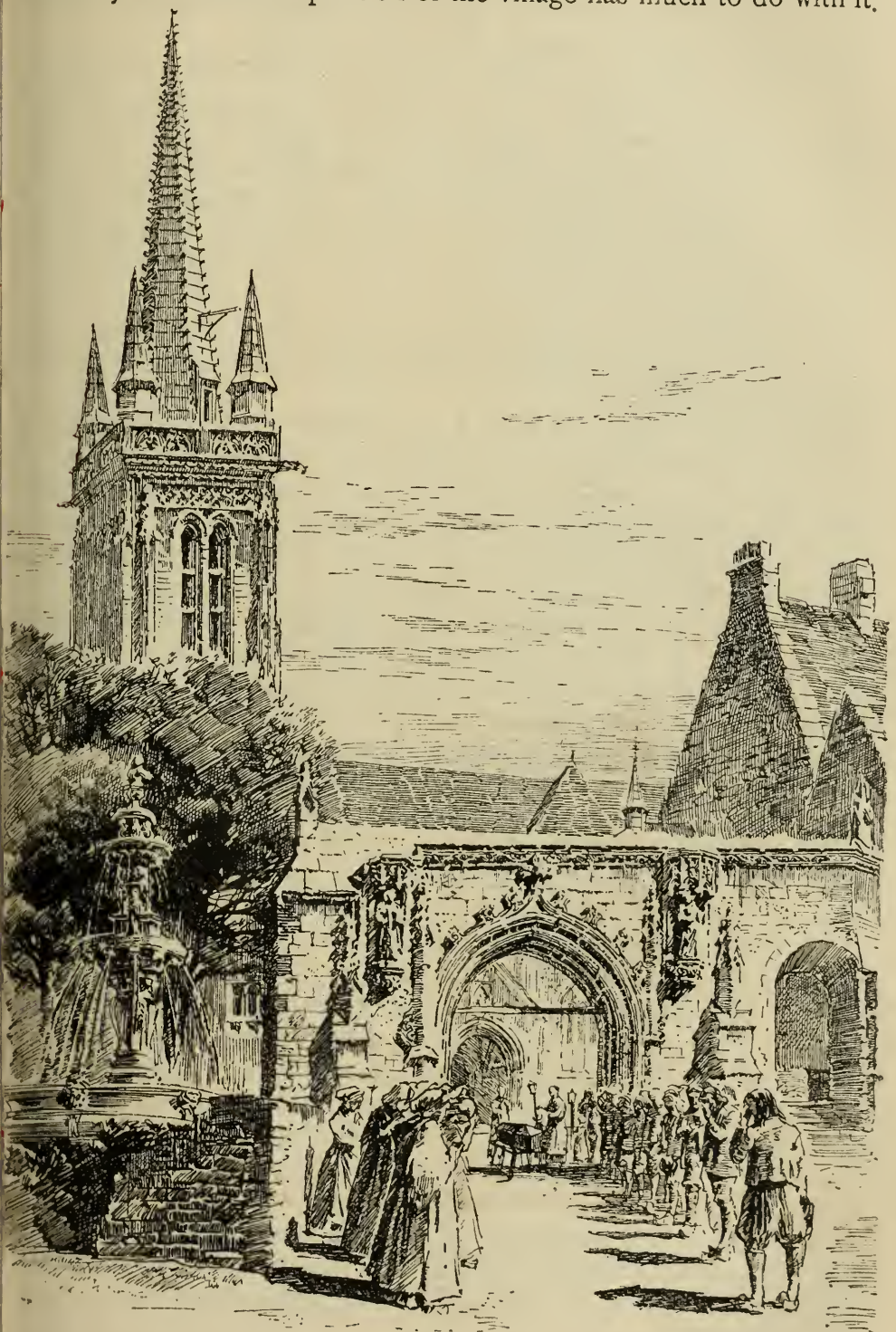
came and talked to us freely—an exception amongst Breton folk; but it was often difficult to understand their mixture of languages. They were



ST. THÉGONNEC.

rather less rough and sturdy-looking than the ordinary type of Breton, and had somewhat the look of having descended from the mediæval

days of their village, becoming pale and long drawn out in the process. Probably the sheltered position of the village has much to do with it.



ST. JEAN-DU-DOIGT.

St. Jean-du-Doigt takes its name from the fact of the church possessing the index finger of the right hand of St. John the Baptist,

carefully preserved in a sheath of gold, silver and enamel, a work of art executed in 1429. The church considers it its greatest possession, and it has been the object of many a pilgrimage. The treasures of St. Jean-du-Doigt are unusually rich and beautiful.

The chief village fête of the year, that in Holland and Belgium would be called Kermesse, in some parts of France Ducasse, is in Brittany called *Pardon.* These are the occasions when the little country is seen at its best, and when all the costume that has come down to the present day exhibits itself. The Bretons take their pleasures somewhat sadly it is true, but even owls sometimes become excited and frivolous, and the Breton, if ever gay and lively, is so at his Pardon.

The Pardon of St. Jean-du-Doigt is, however, not all merriment. It is in some ways one of their saddest days, and it is certainly not all picturesqueness.

On the 23rd June, the day of the Pardon, many of the beggars of Brittany, the extreme poor afflicted with lameness and all sorts of unsightly diseases, make a pilgrimage to the church. A religious service is held, during which they press forward and crowd upon each other that the priest may touch their eyes with the finger of St. John, which is supposed to possess miraculous powers of healing.

Before this, they have all crowded round the fountain in the cemetery, to bathe their eyes and faces in the water, which also has miraculous charms. Then a procession is formed, and begins slowly winding its way to the top of one of the hills: a long procession, consisting of inhabitants, beggars, afflicted, and priests of the church carrying banners, crosses and other signs and symbols. The scene is best seen from the platform of the tower, where you may escape contact with the crowd and enjoy the lovely surrounding view, listen to the surging multitude on one side, and—rather in imagination—the surging of the sea in the Bay of St. Jean on the other.

The object of this procession is a stake or bonfire that has been placed on the summit of one of the hills. This is in communication with the steeple of the church by means of a long wire—and the distance is considerable. At a given signal a firework is launched from the steeple, runs along the wire, and sets light to the stake. As soon as the flames burst forth there is a general discharge of musketry, drums in the fields beat loudly, the smoke of incense, mingling with the smoke of gunpowder, ascends heavenwards, and the priests sing what is called the "Hymn of the Holy Finger."

Les Miraclou—as those are called who have been miraculously cured the previous year by bathing in the water of the fountain, or touching the finger of St. John—of course play an important part in the procession.

To-day it was our fate to see a very different but hardly less effective ceremony. As we were sitting quietly near the beautiful gateway, the hills in front of us, contemplating the sylvan scene

and waiting for our driver, suddenly a small procession appeared coming down the road that wound round the hill out into the world. It was a funeral, and nothing could have been more striking than this concourse of priests and crosses and mourners, some carrying their sad burden, thrown out in conspicuous relief by the green hills and valleys around.

Mournfully and sadly the little group approached. First the priests, then the sad burden, then the women, the chief mourners wearing long cloaks, with hoods thrown over their heads, which made them look like nuns, and followed by quite a large company of men walking bareheaded.

Absolute and solemn silence reigned everywhere, broken only by the measured tread of the men carrying the coffin, which grew more and more audible as they approached; that measured tread that is one of the saddest of sounds. At the gate of the cemetery they paused a moment, then slowly defiled up the churchyard, and disappeared into the church; the chief mourner, who was the widow of the dead man, weeping silently but bitterly.

We were ready to leave, and when the last mourner had disappeared within the church, followed by some of the village people, we turned to our driver and gave him the signal for departure. We left St. Pol very reluctantly. There was an indescribable charm about it, as there is about certain places and certain people. St. Thégonnec, Guimiliau—as far as the villages were concerned, we were glad to turn our backs upon them; nothing attracted us; we had nothing in common with them; the charm was wanting. But at St. Jean-du-Doigt it was the very opposite; we longed to take up a short abode there, and felt that the days would be well spent and full of happiness. But time forbade the indulgence, as time generally forbids all such luxuries to the workers in the world. Only those whose occupation in life is the pursuit of pleasure can, like Dr. Syntax, go off in search of the picturesque, and wander about at their own sweet desire like a will-o'-the-wisp. Such luxuries were not ours; and so it came to pass that, very soon after we had seen the sad procession winding down the hill, we were winding up it; looking back with "long lingering gaze" at the lovely spot which was fast disappearing from view.

"I knew you would be charmed with St. Jean-du-Doigt," said Madame Hellard; "everyone is so. *Le paysage est si riant.* A pity you could not be there for the *Pardon.*"

We hardly agreed with her.

"I assure you," she continued, "seen from the tower, where you are removed from the crowd and the beggars and the sick folk, it is most interesting and picturesque. Am I not right, cher ami?" turning to her husband.

"You are always right," replied Monsieur gallantly.

"Oh, that is prejudice," laughed Madame. "But le Pardon of St

Jean-du-Doigt, with its procession winding up the hill, its bonfire, its religious observances, is quite exceptionally interesting. I am sure when I saw the *dragon* go off from the tower and set fire to the *bûcher*, and heard the charge of musketry and roll of drums, I could have thrown myself off the platform with emotion."

"A mercy for me you did not," replied our host, who was evidently in a very amiable mood that morning. The fair was over and many had left the hotel, and he had more time for repose.

"I hope monsieur has come back with an appetite," said Catherine, referring to H.C., when we had taken our seats at the table d'hôte. We were early, and the first in the room. "It is of no use

MAKING PANCAKES AT THE REGATTA.

running about the country and exhausting our fresh air if one is to remain as thin as a leg of a stork and as pale as Pierrot."

"Where is our vis-à-vis?" we asked, pointing to the empty chair opposite and the very conspicuous vacuum it presented.

"He is gone, thank goodness—with last year's swallows," cried Catherine. "But, alas, he will come back again—like the swallows. Some people bear a charmed life."

"You will find him improved, perhaps."

"*Enlarged*," retorted Catherine, "and with a more capacious appetite—if that be possible; that will be the only change. They say there are limits to all things—I shall never believe it now."

And then the few who were now in the hotel came in, and dinner began; and Catherine's presence filled the room, cap streamers seemed floating about in all directions; and her voice was every now and then heard proclaiming LÂ SUITE.

And later on, in the darkness, we went out according to our custom, and revelled in the old-world streets, the latticed windows, still lighted up, waiting for the curfew—real or figurative, public or domestic. For we all have our curfews, only they are not proclaimed from some ancient tower; and, alas, they are, like Easter, a movable institution; whereby it comes to pass that we too often waste the midnight oil and burn the candle at both ends, and before our time fall into the "sere and yellow leaf."

ACROSS THE RIVER.

HERE we sat beside the river
  Long ago, my Love and I,
Where the willows droop and quiver
  'Twixt the water and the sky.
We were wrapped in fragrant shadow,
  'Twas the quiet vesper time,
And the bells across the meadows
  Mingled with the ripple's chime.
With no thought of ill betiding,
  "Thus," we said, "life's years shall be
For us twain a river gliding
  To a calm, eternal sea."

I am sitting by the river
  Where we used to sit of old,
And the willows droop and quiver
  'Gainst a sky of burning gold;
But my Love long since went onward,
  Down the river's shining tide,
To the land that is far sunward,
  With the angels to abide;
And in pastures fair and vernal,
  In the coming by-and-bye,
Far across the sea eternal
  We shall meet—my Love and I.

HELEN M. BURNSIDE.

AN APRIL FOLLY.

By Gilbert H. Page.

APRIL 1, 1890. 58A, Lincoln's Inn Fields.—I execrate my fellow men—and women! To-day I was over at Catherine's. Not an unusual occurrence with me, but on a more than usually important mission. I needn't note down how I achieved it. Am I likely to forget my impotent speeches? Still, she had given me plenty of excuse for supposing she liked me, and I said so. And then Catherine laughed her exasperating little laugh that always dries up all sentiment on the spot, and makes my blood boil with anger. "I *like* you?" she repeated mockingly; "not at all! not in the least! What can you be dreaming of?"

I did for a moment dream of rolling her elaborately curled head in the dust of the drawing-room carpet; but I restricted myself to saying a few true and exceedingly bitter things, and departed without giving her time to reply; and herewith I register a vow on the tablets of my heart: "If ever again I make a single friendly overture to that young woman, may I cut off the hand that so betrays me!"

By-the-bye, it is April Fools' Day, an appropriate date by which to remember my folly.

April 2.—My feelings are still exceedingly sore. Oh for a cottage in some wilderness—some vast contiguity of shade—whither I might retire, like a stricken hart from the herd, and sulk majestically! The very thing! There rises before me an opportune vision of a certain lonely farm-house I wot of down by a lonely sea. I discovered it last summer while staying at Shoreford. I had ridden westward across the marsh lands of Windle, over the cliffs that form the coast-line between this and Rexingham; and being thirsty, had followed some cows through a rick-yard, in the hopes of obtaining a glass of milk.

There, behind the hayricks, I had come upon my first view of Down End Farm; and the picture of its grey stone, lichened walls, red roof, cosy kitchen and comely mistress, had remained painted on my brain. So, too, I retained a scrap of my conversation with Mrs. Anderson, and her casual mention of the London family then occupying her best rooms. "We don't have many folk at Down End, it being so out of the way, sir; but the gentleman here now says he do like it, just on account of the solitude and quiet."

There was no particular reason at the time why these words should have so impressed me. Solitude was the last thing I desired then, having gone down to Shoreford for my holiday, merely because Catherine was spending the summer there too. But now that every-

thing is over between us, the solitary farm comes as balm to my wounded spirit. Let me see; to-day is Tuesday the 2nd. Good Friday is the day after to-morrow; I could get away to-morrow evening. All right! I'll go out and telegraph to Mrs. Anderson, and pay for her reply.

April 4. Down End Farm.—I reached this last night. At seven o'clock I found myself driving up from Rexingham station, with the crimson flaming brands of the sunset behind me, and the soft mysterious twilight closing in on all sides. It was almost dark when we got to the top of Beacon Point Hill, and quite dark for a time as we began to descend the other side, for the road here is cut down between steep red gravel banks, crowned with sombre fir trees. When these were passed and we reached the remembered stack-yard gate, there was clear heaven again above my head, its exquisite ever-darkening blue already gemmed with the more brilliant stars. The Plough faintly outlined above, and beautiful spica hanging low over Windle Flats. A cheerful glow-worm of red earth-light gleamed from the farm-house windows as we drove round to the inner gate, while at the sound of the wheels the kitchen door opened, and my hostess came down the flagged pathway between the sleepy flowers to bid me welcome.

How delightful the first evening in country quarters always is. How comfortable the wood fire that flamed and sputtered on the parlour hearth, how inviting the meal of tea, new-laid eggs, home-made breads and jams, honey and hot scones spread out upon a spotless cloth around a centre piece of daffodils and early garden flowers. For a rejected suitor I felt singularly cheerful; for a blighted being I made a most excellent meal; and for the desperate misogynist I had determined on becoming I surely felt too much placid satisfaction at Mrs. Anderson's homely talk.

But it was really pleasant to lie back in the capacious leathern chair, while this good woman cleared away the tea-things, and lazily eyeing the fire, listen to the history of herself and her family, of her husband, her children, her landlord, of her courtship, her marriage, her troubles, of the death of her mother in the room overhead the year before last, and of the wedding of her eldest boy Robert which is to take place this summer as soon as the corn is carried.

Such openness of disposition, so often found among people of Mrs. Anderson's class, is very refreshing, and it is convenient too. You know at once where you stand. I wish it were the custom in society. I should then have learned from Catherine's own lips how many fellows she had already sent to the right-about, and I should have given her no opportunity of adding to their number.

I came down very late to breakfast this morning—my first breakfast in the country is always luxuriously late—and I found a tall and pretty young girl busy building up the fire in my sitting-room. I guessed at once she was the "Annie" of whom I heard a long and

pleasing account last night. Annie is the image of what her mother must have been twenty years ago. She has the same agreeable blue eyes, the same soft straw coloured hair. But while Mrs. Anderson wears hers in bands at each side of the head, Annie's is drawn straight back to display the smoothest of white foreheads, the freshest of freckled little faces in the world. She is about seventeen, and a sweet girl, I feel sure. Could no more play with a man's feelings than she could torture one of the creatures committed to her care. She has charge of the poultry, she tells me, and is allowed half the profits. Mem.—I shall eat a great many eggs.

April 5.—I have done an excellent thing in exchanging the hollow shams of society for the healing powers of nature. I shall live to forget Catherine and to be happy yet. And there was after all something artificial about that girl. Pretty, certainly, but with the beauty of the stage; now little Annie here is pretty with the beauty of the sky and meadows.

I am delighted with this place. There is nothing like the country in early spring. Suppose I were never to go back to town again, but stay with the Andersons, see them through the lambing season, lend a hand at tossing the hay, swing a scythe at corn cutting (and probably cut off my own legs into the bargain), drink a health at son Robert's wedding, and then during the winter — yes, during the long dark winter evenings when the wind raves round the old house and whistles down the chimneys, when the boom of the sea echoes all along the coast as it breaks against the cliffs—then to sit in the cosy sitting-room, with the curtains drawn along the low windows, a famous fire flashing and glaring upon the hearth, one's limbs pleasantly weary with the day's labour, one's cheeks tingling from exposure to the keen air; would not this be an agreeable exchange for the feverish anxieties and stagnant pleasures of London life?

After a time, a considerable time no doubt, it would possibly occur to Catherine to wonder what had become of me.

April 6.— Easter Sunday. I am writing in my sitting-room window. I raise my eyes and see first the broad window-sill, whereon stand pots of musk and geranium, not yet in flower; then through the clear latticed panes, the bee-haunted garden, descending by tiny grassy terraces to the kitchen-garden with its rows of peas and beans, its beds of lettuce and potatoe, its neat patches of parsley and thyme; then a field beyond. I note the double meandering hedge-line that indicates the high road, and beyond again the ground rises in sun-bathed pastures and ploughed land to the gorse-covered cliff edge with its background of pure sky; a little to the right, yet still in full view from my window, is an abrupt dip in the cliff, which shows a great wedge of glittering sea. It is here that my eyes always ultimately rest, until they ache with the dazzle and the beauty, and then by a natural transition I think of—Catherine.

At this moment she is probably dressing to go to church, and is

absorbed in the contemplation of a new hat. I should think she had as many hats on her head as hairs—no, I don't mean that; it suggests visions of "ole clo'es"—I mean she must have almost as many hats as hairs on her head.

How inexpressibly mean and petty this devotion to rags and tags and gewgaws seems when one stands in the face of the Immensities and the Eternities! Yet it would appear as though the feminine mind were really incapable of impression by such Carlylean sublimities, for I saw Annie start for church awhile since in a most terrible combination of maroon and magenta. Her best clothes evidently, cachemire and silk, with two flowers and a feather in her hat, her charming baby prettiness as much crushed and eclipsed as bad taste and a country town dressmaker could accomplish. What I like to see Annie in is the simple stuff gown she wears of a morning, with the big bib apron of white linen, and the spotless white collar caressing her creamy throat. I would lock her best clothes up in that delightful carved oak chest that stands upstairs on the landing and throw the key into the sea; and little Annie would let me do it; she is evidently the most docile of child-women. Catherine, now, had I ever ventured on adverse criticism of her garments, would have thrown me into the sea instead.

April 7.—Bank holiday, and wet, of course. The weather is never propitious on the feast of St. Lubbock. The old Saints apparently owe a grudge to this latest addition to the calendar. How beastly it must be in town, with the slushy streets and the beshuttered shops! How depressing for Paterfamilias who arose at seven in the morning to set off with his wife and his brats and the family food-basket to catch some early excursion train! How much more depressing for him who has no train to catch, and nothing at all to do but worry through twelve mortal pleasure hours!

St. Lubbock's malevolent influence doesn't fortunately extend down here, where everything seems to work in time-worn ruts. I walked over the fields opposite. There were a great many new-cropped lambs in the second meadow. They didn't appear to mind the drizzle, but kneeling with their little front legs doubled under them, they sucked vigorously at their mothers, while their long tails danced and quivered in the air.

There was one lamb lying quietly on its side. The ewe stood by, staring down at it with a sort of quiescent curiosity from her brown, stupid, white-lashed eyes. When I went over to her I saw the lamb was dying; its lips moved incessantly, its little body kept rising and falling with its laboured breath, now and then it made a violent effort to get up, but always fell back in the same position. I passed back through the same field about an hour after. There was the lamb still lying, still breathing painfully, still moving its lips as before, but the mother, tired of the spectacle, had walked off, and was calmly munching mangel-wurzel in another part of the field.

I sentimentalised and moralised—naturally; and naturally, too, I thought of Catherine. Strange there should be that vein of hardness running through the entire female sex.

As the rain still continued this afternoon, I proposed to Mrs. Anderson she should show me the house. The excellent creature, busy with the dairy, offered me Annie as her substitute. We went from cellar to garret, and the child's companionship and her ingenuous prattle successfully beguiled a couple of hours. The house in reality consists of two houses placed at right angles to each other. The older part, built between two and three hundred years ago, is inhabited by the Andersons themselves. It consists of a long, low kitchen, with an enormous hearth-place, an oaken settle, smoke-browned rafters, and a bricked floor.

In the centre of the room is a massive but worm-eaten table, capable of seating twenty persons at least. It was built up in the kitchen itself some two hundred years ago, since no earthly ingenuity could have coaxed it through the low windows or narrow door.

Two of these, latticed like those of my sitting room, with the door between them, face west; but long before the sun is down the wooded eminence opposite has intercepted all his beams. Outside is also a garden, full of forget-me-not, daffodil, and other humble flowers. Here Scot, the watch-dog, lies dreaming in his kennel, and beyond the gate the cocks and hens lay dolefully in the rain, or bunch themselves up, lumps of dirty feather, under the shelter of the wood shed.

Upstairs are three sleeping rooms, and the attics, with curious dormer windows, still higher. We come down again to the first floor. A long matted passage runs from one end of the house to the other. It sinks half a step where the newer portion is joined on. This part, containing in all four rooms, two here and two below, was built in July, 1793, as a rudely scratched tablet on the wall outside informs me.

I sit with Annie on the carved chest at the southern end of the passage. The window behind us gives an extensive view of grey rain and grey sea. But I prefer to look at the smiling, freckled face that speaks so eloquently of sunny days. The wet, trailing fingers of the briar-rose climbing over the porch tap tap at the casement, the loose branch of the plane-tree creaks in the wind, the distant sea moans and murmurs; but I prefer to listen to my little friend's artless and occasionally "h-less" English, as she tells me how the Andersons have always been tenants of Down End since her great-grandfather came to the county and added on the living-house to the farm-house for his young wife.

"July, 1793." The date takes my fancy. I can see the Anderson of those days, large-boned, sinewy, stooping, with a red, fiery beard like his present representative, stolid, laborious, contented, building his house here facing the coasts of France, nearly as ignorant of, and quite as indifferent to, the wild work going on over there in Pari

own as little Annie herself can be. King, Dictator, Emperor, King, Emperor, Commune, have come and gone, but the sturdy race of armers sprung from great-grandfather Anderson still carry on the ame way of life in the same identical spot.

"But I'm not amusing you," says Annie, regretfully. "If only it would leave off raining we might go out and have a ride on the tin-an." It takes me some little time, and a closely-knit series of questions, to discover that tin-tan is Southshire for see-saw; and I think how Catherine would laugh at the spectacle of my bobbing up and down on one end of a plank and this little country damsel at the other. Her detestable laughter; but, thank Heaven! I need never suffer from it again.

April 8.—Gloomy again to-day. Ink-coloured rain clouds hanging close over the hills, their fringe-like lower edges showing ragged across a pale sky, against which the hills themselves rise dark and sharp. Now and again a shower of rain falls, but not energetically; the wind blows, the clouds shift, the rain ceases, and the sky darkens or gleams with a watery brightness alternately. Looking over the wide land-scape and leaden sea, here and there a patch of sunshine falls, while I myself walk in gloom; now the sails of a ship catch the radiance, now a farmstead, now a strip of sand over by Windle Flats.

I feel slightly bored. Annie went into Rexingham this morning with Robert and the early milk cart. She is to spend the day with an aunt, and return with the empty cart this evening. Twice a day the Andersons send in their milk to Rexingham, and winter and summer son Robert must rise at 3 a.m. to see to the milking, harness Dolly or Dobbin, and jog off his seven miles. Seven miles there, and seven miles back, morning and evening; that is twenty-eight miles in all, and ever the self-same bit of road in every weather. So that a farmer's life has its seamy side also. But then, to get back of a night! To find a good little wife like Annie waiting for you at the upper gate or by the house door. To eat your supper and smoke your pipe, with your feet on the mantel-piece if you pleased, and no possibility of being ordered into dress clothes to go to some vile theatre or idiotic dance—above all, to know that Catherine knew you were perfectly happy without her—by the bye, I wonder she has not written to me! Not that I want her to, of course. This would entail a few frozen conventional lines back by way of answer. But I am surprised she can endure thus easily the neglect of even the most insignificant of her subjects. I felt sure she would write to ask why I did not call on Sunday. She trusts, no doubt, to the greatness of my folly to bring me again, unasked, to her feet. Her confidence is for once misplaced.

April 9.—A great improvement in the weather. I was awakened by the sun pouring in at my window, and looked out on to a light, bright blue sky, full of white cumuli that cast down purple shadows upon a grey-green sea. I draped myself in the white dimity window

curtain, and watched Annie making her way up between the lettuce rows, with her hands full of primroses. She came from the orchard, where the green tussucked grass at the foot of the apple trees is starred with these lovely little flowers.

I must have a talk with Annie in the orchard one day. It would be just the background to show off her particular style of beauty. I like to suit my scenery to the drama in hand. Catherine would be quite out of place in an orchard, where she might stain her gown, or a harmless beetle or spider terrify her into fits.

There appears to be only one post a day here; but Mrs. Anderson tells me that by walking up to Orton village I might find letters awaiting to-morrow's morning delivery. I was ass enough to go over this afternoon, and of course found nothing.

As I passed the barn on my way in, my ear was saluted by much laughter and shouting. I came upon Annie giving her little brothers a swing. Both great doors of the barn were turned back upon the outside wall and the swing hanging by long ropes to the rafters, and holding two chubby urchins together on the seat, swung out now into the sunshine, now back into the gloom, while Annie stood and pushed merrily. Three tiny calves, penned off in a loose box at one end of the building, stared over the low partition with soft, astonished eyes. It was a charming little picture.

"There, Tim! I can only give you six more!" cries Annie. "I've got to go and make the puddings" (she said "puddens," but what matter?). Before she goes she pulls a handful of grass from the threshold and offers it to the calves. While they tug it this way and that to get it from her hand, she endeavours to plant a kiss on the moist black muzzle of the smallest, but he promptly and ungallantly backs and the grass falls to the ground. At the same moment the children discover me, and an awed silence succeeds to their chatter. Not to embarrass them, I move off and fall a-musing as to whether Catherine could make a pudding to save her life? It is pretty certain it would cost a man *his* to have to eat it; does not even her violin playing, to which she has given indubitable time and attention, set one's teeth on edge to listen to?

Yet why this bitterness? Let me erase Catherine and her deficiencies from my mind for ever.

April 10.—Again no letter! Very well! I know what I will do. I am almost certain I will do it. But first I will go down to the beach and give it a couple of hours' sober reflection. No one shall say I acted hastily, ill-advisedly, or in pique.

I cross over to the cliff edge. Here the gorse is aflame with blossom; the short dry grass is full of tiny insect life. Various larks are singing; each one seems to sing the same song differently; perhaps each never sings the same arrangement twice!

I go down the precipitous coastguards' stairs. At every step it grows hotter. Down on the beach it is very hot, but there is shade

to be found among the boulders at the cliff's base. I sit down and stare along the vacant shore; at the ships floating on the sea; at the clouds floating in the sky; there is no sound but the little grey-green waves as they break and slosh upon the stones.

I think of Catherine and Annie, and I remark that the breakwaters are formed of hop-poles, twined together and clasped with red-rusted iron girdles; the wood has been washed by the tides white and clean as bones. I wonder whether I shall ask Annie to be my wife, and I wonder also whence came those—literally—millions of wine bottle corks that strew the beach to my right. From a wreck? from old fishing nets? or merely from the natural consumption of beer at the building of the breakwater?

Coming back to Down End, I find a travelling threshing machine at work in the rick-yard. I had heard the monotonous thrumming of its wheels a good way off. The scene is one of great animation, the machine is drawn up against the conical-shaped haystack, its black smoke stretches out in serpentine coils against the sky. A dozen men are busy about her: those who work her, old Anderson, son Robert—a dreadful lout he is too, quite unlike his sister—various other louts of the same calibre, the two little boys, very much in everyone's way, and Mrs. Anderson and Annie, who have just brought out jugs of ale. I naturally stop to say a few words to Annie and watch the threshing. Anderson is grinding out some of last year's oats for the cattle.

Son Robert comes to take a pull out of Annie's jug. "That's prime, measter, ain't it?" he says to me, and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. I go in thoughtfully. Is son Robert exactly the sort of man I should care to call brother-in-law?

April 11, 12.—These two days I have been casting up the pros and cons of a marriage with Annie. Shall it be—or not be? I suffer from a Hamlet-like perplexity. On the one hand I get a good, an amiable, an adoring little wife, who would forestall my slightest wish, who would warm my slippers for me, for whom I should be the Alpha and Omega of existence. She would never argue with me, never contradict me, never dream of laughing *at* me; would never laugh at all unless I allowed her, for she would give into my keeping, as a good wife should, the key of her smiles and of her tears. But of course I should wish her to laugh. I should wish the dear little creature to remain as merry and thoughtless as possible. Dear Annie! what surprise and delight will shine in your innocent blue eyes when I tell you my story! Your childlike gratitude will be almost embarrassing. Last, and perhaps most weighty pro of all—when Catherine hears of it she will be filled with regret; yes, she may act indifference as gaily as she pleases, I am convinced that in her heart of hearts she will be sorry.

Now for the cons; they, too, are many. As I said before, I should not like son Robert to call me brother. I should find honest old

Anderson père rather a trial with his red beard, his broken nails, the yawning chasm between his upper teeth; even Mrs. Anderson, so comely and pleasant here in her own farm-house, would suffer by being transplanted to Lincoln's Inn. So might little Annie herself. A lapsed "h" in a country hay-field has much less significance than when lost at a London dinner-table. How is it, I wonder, that while the dear child generally speaks of 'ay and 'ouse, she invariably besmirches with the strongest of aspirates the unfortunate village of H'Orton? Still, it would be easy to correct this, delightful to educate her during our quiet evenings, to read with her all my favourite prose writers and poets! And, even supposing she couldn't learn, is classical English in the wife an infallible source of married happiness? Let me penetrate below externals and examine into the realities of things.

I spend most of Friday and Saturday in this examination without making any sensible progress until supper on Saturday night, when I casually mention to Annie, who is laying the table, that I am bound to leave Down End on the following Monday, as term begins on the 15th.

"Must you really go? Well, we shall miss you, surely," says Annie. And I am not mistaken; there is a wistfulness in her blue eyes, a poignant regret in her voice that goes to my heart.

No, Annie! that decides me; I have suffered too much from blighted affection ever to inflict the same pangs on another. I am too well read myself in Love's sad, glad book to mistake the signs written in your innocent face. Without vanity I can see how different I must appear in your eyes to all the farm hands and country bumpkins you have hitherto met; without fatuity I can understand how unconsciously almost to yourself you have given me your young affections. Well, to-morrow you shall know you have won back mine in exchange.

If Catherine could but guess what is impending!

April 13 (Sunday).—Annie in the maroon and magenta gown, carrying a clean folded handkerchief and a Church Service in her hand, has gone up to church.

The bells are still ringing, and I am wandering through the little copse on the right of the farm. This wood, or plantation rather, flourishes down hill, fills up the narrow, interlying valley, and courageously climbs the eminence beyond. As I descend, it becomes more and more sheltered. The wind dies away and the church bells are heard no longer. I am following a cart-track used by the woodcutters. It is particularly bad walking. The last cart must have passed through in soft weather, the ruts are cut so deep, and these are filled with water from the last rains. The new buds are but just "exploding" into leaf; here and there the Dryades have laid down a carpet of white anemone flowers to dance on; trailing brambles lie across the track, with October's bronze and purple-green leaves, still

hale and hearty, making an exquisite contrast with the young, brilliant, fan-folded shoots just springing at their base.

I will find an opportunity to speak to Annie this very afternoon. She is likely to be less busy to-day than at other times. I need not trouble much as to how I shall tell her. She is sure to listen to me in a sweet, bewildered silence. She will have no temptation to laugh at the most beautiful and sacred of earthly themes. There is, to my mind, something incurably frivolous about a woman who laughs when a man is in earnest. I have tried over and over again to impress this upon Catherine, but it never had any other effect but to increase her amusement. She is a young woman entirely without the bump of veneration, and *this*, I should say, far more than an elegant pronunciation, is the desideratum in a wife.

Sunday evening. I am in the mental condition of "Truthful James." I ask myself: "Do I wake? Do I dream?" I inquire at set intervals whether the Caucasian is played out? So far as I represent the race, I am compelled to reply in the affirmative. This is what has happened. I was smoking my post-prandial cigar in the terraced garden, lying back in a comfortable basket-chair fetched out from the sitting-room, when a shadow fell upon the grass, and Mrs. Anderson appeared in her walking things to know if there was anything I was likely to want, as she and "Faäther" and the little boys were just starting for *H'*Orton.

"Don't trouble about me," said I; "go and enjoy yourself. No one better deserves it than you, Mrs. Anderson." And I add diplomatically: "Doesn't Miss Annie also go with you?"

"Annie's over Fuller's Farm way," says the good woman smiling; and I smile too, for no particular reason. "She mostly walks up there of a Sunday afternoon."

I know Fuller's Farm. I have passed it in my rambles. You skirt the copse, cross the sunny upland field, drop over the stile to the right, and find yourself in Fuller's Lane. The farm is a little further on, a comfortable homestead, smaller than Down End, but built of the same grey, lichened stone, and with the same steep roof and dormer windows.

I gave the Andersons ten minutes start, then rose, unlatched the gate, and followed Annie. I reached the upland field. It was dotted with sheep: ewes and lambs; long shadows sloped across it; a girl stood at the further gate. This was Annie, but alas! someone was with her; a loutish figure that I at first took to be that of son Robert. But as I came nearer, I saw it was not Robert but his equally loutish friend, the young fellow I had seen working with him by the threshing machine. That day, in his working clothes, he had looked what he was, a strong and honest young farmer. To-day, in his Sunday broadcloth, with a brilliant blue neck scarf, a brass horse-shoe pin, and a large bunch of primroses in his button-hole, he looked a blot, an excrescence, on the sunny earth. Personally, he

might have been tall, but for a pronounced stoop; fair, but that he was burnt brick colour; smooth-faced, but for the multitude of lines and furrows, resulting from long exposure to the open air. His voice I couldn't help admitting was melodious and manly, yet the moment he caught sight of me he shuffled his feet like an idiot, and blushed like a girl. He whispered something to his companion, dropped over the stile like a stone from a catapult, and vanished from view.

Annie advanced to meet me, blushing sweetly. She had put a finishing touch to the magenta costume by a large pink moss rosebud. She looked at it with admiration.

"Me and my young man have changed nosegays," she remarked simply; "he asked me to give him my primroses, and he gave me this. They do grow beautiful roses up at Fuller's."

"Your what?" said I dismayed. "Who did you say?"

"My young man," repeated Annie; "Edward Fuller, from the next farm. He and me have been keeping company since Christmas only, but I've known him all my life. We always sat together in school; he used to do my sums for me, and I've got still a box full of slate pencil ends which he had touched."

So my card castle came to the cloth. Here was a genuine case of true idyllic boy and girl love, that had strengthened and ripened with mature years. Annie had no more given me a thought—what an ass, what an idiot I am! But really, I think Catherine's cruelty has turned my brain. I am become ready to plunge into any folly.

And it would have been folly. After the first second's surprise and mortification, I felt my spirits rise with a leap. I was suddenly dragged back from moral suicide. The fascinating temptation was placed for ever beyond my reach. And it was Edward Fuller who thus saved me! Good young man! I fall upon your neck in spirit, and kiss you like a brother.

I am still free! who knows what to-morrow may bring.

April 14.—To-morrow is here and has brought a letter from Catherine. I find it lying by my plate when I come down to breakfast. I take it up, look at the superscription, partly in Catherine's well-known writing, partly in my landlady's spider scrawl—for it had gone first to my London rooms. I turn it over, feel it, decide it contains one sheet of paper only, and put it resolutely down. After breakfast is time enough to read it; nothing she can say shall ever move me more.

I pour out my coffee; my resolutions waver and dissipate themselves like the steam rising from my cup. I tear the letter open, and find myself in Heaven straightway. And these are the winged words that bore me there:—

"Why do you not come and see me? Why are you so blind? It is true I do not *like* you! But I love you with all my heart. Ah! could you not guess? did you not know?"

"PROCTORISED."

WHAT a ghostly train from the forgotten past rises before me as I write the word that heads this sketch! The memory dwells again upon that terrible quarter of an hour in the Proctor's ante-chamber, where the brooding demon of "fine" and "rustication" seemed to dwell, and where the disordered imagination so clearly traced above the door Dante's fearful legend—Abandon hope all ye that enter here.

How eagerly each delinquent scanned the faces of his fellow-victims as they came forth from the Proctorial presence, vainly trying to gather from their looks some forecast of his impending fate; and how jealously (if a "senior") he eyed the freshman who was going to plead a first offence!

And then the interview that followed—not half so terrible as was expected. The good-natured individual who stood before the fire, in blazer and slippers, was barely recognisable as the terrible official of yesterday's encounter; while the sleek attendant at the Proctor's elbow seemed more like a waiter than the pertinacious and fleet-footed "bull-dog." What a load was raised from the mind as the Proctor made a mild demand for five shillings, and the "bull-dog" pointed to a plate into which you gladly tossed the half-crowns. And then you quitted the room which you vowed never again to enter, feeling that you had been let down very easily. For you knew full well that beneath the Proctor's suave demeanour lurked a sting which too often took the painful form of rustication from the University.

But let us accompany the Proctor as he makes his nightly rounds with his faithful body-guard, and look once more upon the ceremony of "proctorisation."

What an imposing figure he is! The silk gown adorned with velvet sleeves; the white bands round his neck denoting the sanctity of his office; his sturdy attendants: are they not calculated to overawe the frivolous undergraduate?

Following him through the streets, into billiard-room and restaurant, one moralises on the sad necessity that compels this splendid dignitary to play the part of a common policeman. But there is little time for thought. On we go, on our painful mission. Suddenly the keen-eyed "bull-dog" crosses the street, for an undergraduate has just come forth from a tobacconist's shop. He is wearing cap and gown, and—oh, heinous offence—he puffs the "herba nicotiana."

The Proctor steps forward (for smoking in Academical dress is sternly forbidden) and, producing a note-book, vindicates thus the dignity of the law.

"Are you a member of this University, sir?" The offender

murmurs that he is. "Your name and college, sir. I must trouble you to call upon me at nine a.m. to-morrow." Then, with raised cap and ceremonious bow, the Proctor leaves his victim to speculate mournfully on what the morrow will bring forth.

Forward! and we move on once more in quest of offenders against the "statutes." What curious reading some of these statutes afford! We seem to get a whiff from bygone ages as we read the enactment condemning the practice of wearing the hair long as unworthy the University; and equally curious is the provision that forbids the student to carry any weapon save a bow and arrow.

But let us continue our journey. Tramp, tramp, tramp! No wonder we find the streets empty: our echoing footsteps give the alarm. But soon we make another capture. This time the undergraduate seeks refuge in flight, but in vain. "Fast" though he is, the bull-dog is faster; and the Proctor enters another name in his note-book. Let him who runs read.

On we go; now visiting the railway station—favourite hunting-ground of the Proctor—now waiting while the theatre discharges its contents; for there the gownless student abounds and the Proctor's heart grows merry.

Here a prisoner states that he is Jones, of Jesus. Vain subterfuge! Though there be many Welshmen at Jesus College, and many of its alumni bear the name of Jones, yet are you not of their number. So says the Proctor, a don of Jesus; and the pseudo Jones wishes that he had not been born.

Twelve o'clock now strikes, and our nightly vigil draws to a close. Still we move forward, amid the jangling rivalry of a thousand bells. Soon the Proctor adds yet another to the list of victims. This one leads us a pretty dance from Carfax to Summertown, and then declares he is not a member of the University. The Proctor smiles as a vision of Theodore Hook flashes across his mind; but, alas! the "bull-dog" recognises the prisoner as an old offender.

Unhappy man! Your dodge does not "go down," although beyond a doubt you will; for the Proctor will visit your double offence with summary rustication.

F. D. H.

UNEXPLAINED.

By Letitia McClintock.

"ALL ghost stories may be explained," said Mrs. Marchmont, smiling rather scornfully, and addressing a large circle of friends and neighbours who, one Christmas evening, were seated round her hospitable hearth.

"Ah! you think so? Pardon me, if I cannot agree with you," said Mr. Henniker, a well-known Dublin barrister, of burly frame and jovial countenance, famed for his wit and flow of anecdote.

The ladies of the party uttered exclamations in various keys, while the men looked attentive and interested. All that Mr. Henniker pleased to say was wont to command attention, in Dublin at least.

"So you think all ghost stories may be explained? What would Mrs. Marchmont say to our old woman in the black bonnet, Angela?" And the barrister turned to his quiet little wife, who rarely opened her lips. She was eager enough now.

"I wish I could quite forget that old woman, John, dear," she said, with a shiver.

"Won't you tell us, dear Mrs. Henniker? Please—please do!" cried the ladies in chorus.

"Nay; John must tell that tale," said the wife, shrinking into herself, as it were.

No one knew how it happened that the conversation had turned upon mesmerism, spiritualism and other themes trenching upon the supernatural. Perhaps the season, suggesting old-fashioned tales, had something to do with it; or maybe the whistling wind, mingling with the pattering of hail and rattle of cab-wheels, led the mind to brood over uncanny legends. Anyhow, all the company spoke of ghosts: some to mock, others to speculate; and here was the witty lawyer prepared to tell a grave tale of his own experience.

His jovial face grew stern. Like the Ancient Mariner, he addressed himself to one in company, but all were silent and attentive.

"You say all ghost stories may be explained, Mrs. Marchmont. So would I have said a year ago; but since we last met at your hospitable fireside, my wife and I have gone through a very astonishing experience. We 'can a tale unfold.' No man was better inclined to laugh at ghost stories than I.

"Well, to begin my true tale. We wished for a complete change of scene last February, and Angela thought she would like to reside in the same county as her sisters and cousins and aunts ——"

"Dorsetshire, I believe, Mrs. Henniker?" interrupted the lady of the house.

Angela nodded.

"I intended to take a house for my family, leave them comfortably settled in it, and run backwards and forwards between Dorsetshire and Dublin. Well, it so happened that I did leave them for a single day during the three months of my tenancy of the Hall. I had seen a wonderful advertisement of a spacious dwelling-house, with offices, gardens, pleasure grounds—to be had for fifty pounds per annum. I went to the agent to make inquiries.

"'Is this flourishing advertisement correct?' asked I.

"'Perfectly.'

"'What! so many advantages are to be had for fifty pounds a year?'

"'Most certainly. I advise you to go and see for yourself.'

"I took the agent's advice, and Angela was enchanted with the description I was able to give her on my return. A charming little park, beautifully planted with rare shrubs and trees—a bowery, secluded spot, so shut in by noble elms as to seem remote from the world. The house—such a mansion as in Ireland would be called Manor-house or Castle—large, lofty rooms thoroughly furnished, every modern improvement. My wife, as surprised as myself that a place of the kind should be going for a mere song, begged me to see the agent again, and close with him. It was done at once. I would have taken the Hall for a year, but Mr. Harold advised me not to do so. 'Take it by the quarter, or at longest by the half-year,' he recommended.

"I replied that it appeared such a desirable bargain that I wished to take it by the year. His answer to this was a reiteration of his first advice. I can't tell you how he influenced me, for he really said no more than I tell you; but I yielded to his evident wish without knowing why I did so, and I closed with him for six months, not a year."

"Glamour, Mr. Henniker!"

"It would seem so, Mrs. Marchmont. We went to the Hall, and Angela was delighted with it. The snowdrops lay in snowy masses about the grounds—the garden gave promise of beauty as the season advanced. How the children ran over the house! how charmed we were with every nook and corner of it! Our own bed-room was a comfortable, large room, opening into a very roomy dressing-room, in which my wife placed two cribs for our youngest boys, Hal and Jack ——"

"Don't forget to say that our bed-chamber opened from a sitting-room," interrupted Mrs. Henniker.

"Well, for three weeks we all slept the sleep of the just in our really splendid suite of apartments. Not a grumble from our servants—nothing but satisfaction with our rare bargain. I was on the eve of returning to dear, dirty Dublin and the Four Courts when ——"

"When? We are all attention, Mr. Henniker."

"Angela and I were sitting in the drawing-room under the bed-namber I have described, when a loud cry startled us, 'Mother, nother, mother!'

"The little boys were in bed in the dressing-room. Angela ropped her tea-cup and dashed out of the room, forgetting that here was no light in the rooms above us.

"I caught up a candle and followed her quickly. We found the ildren sobbing wildly. Jack's arms were almost strangling his other, while he cried in great excitement, 'Oh, the old woman in e black bonnet! The old woman in the black bonnet! Oh—oh -oh!'

"I thought a little fatherly correction would be beneficial, but ngela would not suffer me to interfere. She tried to soothe the tle beggars, and in a few minutes they were coherent enough in eir story. A frightful old woman, wearing a black bonnet, had en in the room. She came close to them and bent over their ibs, with her dreadful face near to theirs.

"'How did you see her?' we asked. 'There was no candle here.'

"She had light about her, they said; at any rate, they saw her ite well. An exhaustive search was made. No trace of a human ing was to be found. I refrained from speaking to the other ildren, who slept in an upper story, though I softly entered their oms and examined presses and wardrobes, and peeped behind rk corners, laughing in my sleeve all the while. Of course we th believed that Hal had been frightened by a dream, and that his tle brother had roared from sympathy. 'Don't breathe a word of s to the servants,' whispered Mrs. Henniker. 'I'm not such a ol, my dear,' I replied. 'But pray search the lower regions, and if Jane and Nancy have any visitor in the kitchen,' she con-ued. 'She came through your door, mother, from the sitting-om,' sobbed Hal, with eyes starting out of his head.

"'Who, love?' asked his mother.

"'The old woman in the black bonnet. Oh, don't go away, other.'

"So Angela had to spend the remainder of the evening between children's cribs.

"'What can we do to-morrow evening?' asked she. 'I have it! cy shall be put to bed beside Jack.' Lucy was our youngest, d two.

"All went well next night. There was no alarm to summon us m our papers and novels, and we went to bed at eleven, Angela narking that the three cherubs were sleeping beautifully, and that ad been a good move to let Lucy bear the other two company. I s roused out of sound sleep by wild shrieks from the three ldren.

"'What! more bad dreams? This sort of thing must be put a

stop to,' I said; and I confess I was very angry with the young rascals. My wife was fumbling for the match-box. 'Hush!' she whispered, 'there *is* somebody in the room.' And *I*, too, at that instant, felt the presence of some creature besides ourselves and the children. The candle lighted, we again reconnoitred—nothing to be seen in dressing-room, bed-room, or *the drawing-room beyond*, the door of which was shut. But the curious sense of a presence near us—stronger than any feeling of the kind I had ever previously experienced—was gone. You have all felt the presence of another person unseen. You may be writing—you have not heard the door open, but though your back is towards the visitor, you know somehow that he has entered."

"Quite true, Mr. Henniker—but there is nothing unnatural or unpleasant in that sensation."

"Nothing, of course; I merely instance it to give you some idea of what we felt on that occasion. We were astonished to find the sitting-room untenanted. Meanwhile poor Hal, Jack and Lucy shrieked in chorus 'Oh, the old woman in the black bonnet! Oh take her away!'

"Poor Angela, trembling, hung over the cribs trying to soothe the children. It was a good while before they could tell what had happened. 'She came again,' said Hal, 'and she came close, close to me, and she put her *cold* face down near my cheek till she touched me, and I don't like her—oh, I don't like her, mother!'

"'Did she go to Jack and Lucy too?'

"'Yes, yes; and she made *them* cry as well.'

"'Why do you not like her? Is it the black bonnet? You dreamt of a black bonnet last night, you know,' said I, half-puzzled half-provoked.

"'She's so frightful,' cried Hal.

"'How could you see her? There was no candle.'

"This question perplexed the little boys. They persisted that she had a light about her somewhere. I need hardly say that there was no comfort for us the rest of the night. 'If anyone is trying to frighten us out of the place, I'll be even with him yet,' said I. My wife believed that a trick had been played upon the children, and she was most indignant.

"Next day the cribs were removed to the upper story, and Charlotte and Joanna, our daughters of twelve and fourteen, were put to sleep in the dressing-room. We predicted an end to the annoyance we had been suffering. The nurse was a quick-tempered woman, who would not stand any nonsense, and Hal's bad dreams would be sternly driven away. We settled ourselves to our comfortable light reading by the drawing-room fire. Suddenly there was a commotion overhead; an outcry—surprised more than terrified, it sounded to us. Angela laid her book down quickly and listened with all her ears. Fast-flying footsteps were heard above; the clapping of a door;

nen—scurry, scurry—the patter of bare feet down the staircase. We urried across the hall, and saw Charlotte in her nightgown returning lowly up the kitchen stairs, with a puzzled expression on her honest ace.

"'What on earth are you doing, child?' cried Angela.

"'I was giving chase to a hideous old woman in a black bonnet, ho chose to intrude upon us,' panted Charlotte. 'I saw her in ur room; I jumped out of bed and pursued her through your room nd the sitting-room. Then I saw her before me going downstairs, nd I ran after her; but the door at the foot of the kitchen staircase as shut. She certainly could not have had time to open it, and I eally don't know where she can have gone to!'

"This was Charlotte's explanation of her mad scurry downstairs. Ier downright sensible face was puzzled and angry.

"'So you see the little ones must have been tormented by that ld wretch, whoever she is. They didn't dream it, father, as you nought. Wouldn't I like to punish her!'"

"What a brave girl!" cried Mrs. Marchmont.

"Brave? Oh, Charlotte's as bold as a lion! She went back to ed; and when we followed her, in a couple of hours, she was sleep- ng soundly. But I can't say either of *us* slept so well. If a trick as being played upon us, it was carried out in so clever a manner ; to baffle me completely. I need not say that I made careful earch of every cranny about the handsome house and offices; and there was a secret passage or a door in the wall anywhere, it scaped me. We had peace for a fortnight, and then the annoyance commenced.

"Angela's nerve was shaken at last, and she began to whisper, There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio'——"

"John, you are making a story!" interrupted Mrs. Henniker.

"It is every word true. I am coming to an end. Angela, in ite of her disclaimer, *did* believe in a ghost in a black bonnet. harlotte believed in her, but did not care about her ghostship. he nurse and cook and housemaid declared they were meeting the rrible appearance constantly; and they were all three in a mortal nk. As to the children, they would not leave off clinging to their ther, and fretting and trembling when evening came. The milk- n, the baker and the butcher, all told the servants that we would t be long at the Hall, for nobody ever remained more than a nth or two. This was cheerful and encouraging for me!"

"But you had never seen the charming old woman all this time?"

"No; but I saw her in the broad daylight. I had a good long k at her, and a more diabolical face I never saw—no, not even in dock. I was writing letters in the study about twelve o'clock e morning, when I suddenly looked up, to see the appearance that l excited such a turmoil in my family standing near the table. A htful face—a short-set woman dressed in black—gown, shawl,

bonnet—this was the impression I received. But she looked quite human—quite everyday—there was nothing ghostly in her air—only the evil face curdled one's blood. I stared at her, and then I took up a folded newspaper and threw it at her. My motive in so doing was to frighten her who had frightened my wife so much. Courtesy such a creature need not expect from me, being, as her villainous countenance proved, one of the criminal class. The newspaper fell upon the floor, after apparently going through the figure, and there was a vacuum where it had been. I was not much shaken, however, although my theory of a human trickster dressed like a woman seemed overturned."

"Did you tell Mrs. Henniker what you had seen?"

"Naturally I did. At this period we talked of nothing else. She saw the apparition twice herself. Once she entered our dressing-room and saw the figure bending over a sleeping child (it faded as she looked); another time she was with me in the drawing-room, when she laid down her book and whispered, 'See, see, near the door!' There, sure enough was the appearance that had visited me in the study in clear daylight. I did not make her out quite as distinctly now because our candles did not light up that end of the long room, or my older eyes were not as good as Angela's."

"What did Mrs. Henniker do?"

"She started up and ran to catch the old woman in the black bonnet."

"And did she catch her?"

"She caught a *shiver*—nothing more!

"After this I resolved to give up the Hall at once, sacrificing four months' rent for the sake of my wife and children, whose nerves would have soon become shattered had we remained. I went to Mr Harold and told him how disagreeable the place was to us. He was grave and very guarded in manner, confessing that no tenant stayed more than a couple of months at the Hall—that his client certainly made considerably in consequence—that he had done his utmost to find out what was wrong with the house, but all in vain. Mr J—— would not speak about it, and when strenuously urged to explain, replied emphatically—'*I shall never tell you the story of that house.*'

"We dismissed the servants with handsome presents at once on our return to Dublin, so desirous were we that the children should never be reminded of their terror. I think they have not heard the old woman in the black bonnet spoken of since we left the Hall, and the younger ones have probably forgotten her. As to us, we can only say that the mystery is unexplained."

M. L. GOW. R. TAYR.

SISTER AGNES KNELT FOR A FEW MOMENTS, AND BENT HER HEAD IN SILENT P

THE ARGOSY.

MAY, 1891.

THE FATE OF THE HARA DIAMOND.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JANET IN A NEW CHARACTER.

ON entering Lady Chillington's room for the second time, Janet found that the mistress of Deepley Walls had completed her toilette in the interim, and was now sitting robed in stiff rustling silk, with an Indian fan in one hand and a curiously-chased vinaigrette in the other. She motioned with her fan to Janet. "Be seated," she said, in the iciest of tones; and Janet sat down on a chair a yard or two removed from her ladyship.

"Since you were here last, Miss Hope," she began, "I have seen Sister Agnes, who informs me that she has already given you an outline of the duties I shall require you to perform should you agree to accept the situation which ill-health obliges her to vacate. At the same time, I wish you clearly to understand that I do not consider you in any way bound by what I have done for you in the time gone by, neither would I have you in this matter run counter to your inclinations in the slightest degree. If you would prefer that a situation as governess should be obtained for you, say so without hesitation; and any small influence I may have shall be used ungrudgingly in your behalf. Should you agree to remain at Deepley Walls, your salary will be thirty guineas a-year. If you wish it, you can take a day for consideration, and let me have your decision in the morning."

Lady Chillington's mention of a fixed salary stung Janet to the quick: it was so entirely unexpected. It stung her, but only for a moment; the next she saw and gratefully recognised the fact that she should no longer be a pensioner on the bounty of Lady Chillington. A dependent she might be—a servant even, if you like; but at least she would be earning her living by the labour of her own hands; and even about the very thought of such a thing there was a sweet sense of independence that flushed her warmly through and through.

Her hesitation lasted but a moment, then she spoke. "Your

ladyship is very kind, but I require no time for consideration," she said. "I have already made up my mind to take the position which you have so generously offered me; and if my ability to please you only prove equal to my inclination, you will not have much cause to complain."

A faint smile of something like satisfaction flitted across Lady Chillington's face. "Very good, Miss Hope," she said, in a more gracious tone than she had yet used. "I am pleased to find that you have taken so sensible a view of the matter, and that you understand so thoroughly your position under my roof. How soon shall you be prepared to begin your new duties?"

"I am ready at this moment."

"Come to me an hour hence, and I will then instruct you."

In this second interview, brief though it was, Janet could not avoid being struck by Lady Chillington's stately dignity of manner. Her tone and style were those of a high-bred gentlewoman. It seemed scarcely possible that she and the querulous, shrivelled-up old woman in the cashmere dressing-robe could be one and the same individual.

Unhappily, as Janet to her cost was not long in finding out, her ladyship's querulous moods were much more frequent than her moods of quiet dignity. At such times she was very difficult to please; sometimes, indeed, it was utterly impossible to please her: not even an angel could have done it. Then, indeed, Janet felt her duty weigh very hardly upon her. By nature her temper was quick and passionate—her impulses high and generous; but when Lady Chillington was in her worse moods, she had to curb the former as with an iron chain; while the latter were outraged continually by Lady Chillington's mean and miserly mode of life, and by a certain low and sordid tone of thought which at such times pervaded all she said and did. And yet, strange to say, she had rare fits of generosity and goodwill—times when her soul seemed to sit in sackcloth and ashes, as if in repentance for those other occasions when the "dark fit" was on her, and the things of this world claimed her too entirely as their own.

After her second interview with Lady Chillington, Janet at once hurried off to Sister Agnes to tell her the news. "On one point only, so far as I see at present, shall I require any special information," she said. "I shall need to know exactly the mode of procedure necessary to be observed when I pay my midnight visits to Sir John Chillington."

"It is not my intention that you should visit Sir John," said Sister Agnes. "That portion of my old duties will continue to be performed by me."

"Not until you are stronger—not until your health is better than it is now," said Janet earnestly. "I am young and strong; it is merely a part of what I have undertaken to do, and you must please

let me do it. I have outgrown my childish fears, and could visit the Black Room now without the quiver of a nerve."

"You think so by daylight, but wait until the house is dark and silent, and then say the same conscientiously, if you can do so."

But Janet was determined not to yield the point, nor could Sister Agnes move her from her decision. Ultimately a compromise was entered into by which it was agreed that for one evening at least they should visit the Black Room together, and that the settlement of the question should be left until the following day.

Precisely as midnight struck they set out together up the wide, old-fashioned staircase, past the door of Janet's old room, up the narrower staircase beyond, until the streak of light came into view and the grim, nail-studded door itself was reached. Janet was secretly glad that she was not there alone; so much she acknowledged to herself as they halted for a moment while Sister Agnes unlocked the door. But when the latter asked her if she were not afraid, if she would not much rather be snug in bed, Janet only said: "Give me the key; tell me what I have to do inside the room, and then leave me."

But Sister Agnes would not consent to that, and they entered the room together. Instead of seven years, it seemed to Janet only seven hours since she had been there last, so vividly was the recollection of her first visit still impressed upon her mind. Everything was unchanged in that chamber of the dead, except, perhaps, the sprawling cupids on the ceiling, which looked a shade dingier than of old, and more in need of soap and water than ever. But the black draperies on the walls, the huge candles in the silver tripods, the pall-covered coffin in the middle of the room, were all as Janet had seen them last. There, too, was the oaken *prie-dieu* a yard or two away from the head of the coffin. Sister Agnes knelt on it for a few moments, and bent her head in silent prayer.

"My visit to this room every midnight," said Sister Agnes, "is made for the simple purpose of renewing the candles, and of seeing that everything is as it should be. That the visit should be made at midnight, and at no other time, is one of Lady Chillington's whims—a whim that by process of time has crystallised into a law. The room is never entered by day."

"Was it whim or madness that caused Sir John Chillington to leave orders that his body should be kept above ground for twenty years?"

"Who shall tell by what motive he was influenced when he had that particular clause inserted in his will? Deepley Walls itself hangs on the proper fulfilment of the clause. If Lady Chillington were to cause her husband's remains to be interred in the family vault before the expiry of the twenty years, the very day she did so the estate would pass from her to the present baronet, a distant cousin, between whom and her ladyship there has been a bitter feud of many years' standing. Although Deepley Walls has been in the family for a

hundred and fifty years, it has never been entailed. The entailed estate is in Yorkshire, and there Sir Mark, the present baronet, resides. Lady Chillington has the power of bequeathing Deepley Walls to whomsoever she may please, providing she carry out strictly the instructions contained in her husband's will. It is possible that in a court of law the will might have been set aside on the ground of insanity, or the whole matter might have been thrown into Chancery. But Lady Chillington did not choose to submit to such an ordeal. All the courts of law in the kingdom could have given her no more than she possessed already—they could merely have given her permission to bury her husband's body, and it did not seem to her that such a permission could compensate for turning into public gossip a private chapter of family history. So here Sir John Chillington has remained since his death, and here he will stay till the last of the twenty years has become a thing of the past. Two or three times every year Mr. Winter, Sir Mark's lawyer, comes over to Deepley Walls to satisfy himself by ocular proof that Sir John's instructions are being duly carried out. This he has a legal right to do in the interests of his client. Sometimes he is conducted to this room by Lady Chillington, sometimes by me; but even in his case her ladyship will not relax her rule of not having the room visited by day."

Sister Agnes then showed Janet that behind the black draperies there was a cupboard in the wall, which on being opened proved to contain a quantity of large candles. One by one Sister Agnes took out of the silver tripods what remained of the candles of the previous day, and filled up their places with fresh ones. Janet looked on attentively. Then, for the second time, Sister Agnes knelt on the *prie-dieu* for a few moments, and then she and Janet left the room.

Next day Sister Agnes was so ill, and Janet pressed so earnestly to be allowed to attend to the Black Room in place of her, and alone, that she was obliged to give a reluctant consent.

It was not without an inward tremor that Janet heard the clock strike twelve. Sister Agnes had insisted on accompanying her part of the way upstairs, and would, in fact, have gone the whole distance with her, had not Janet insisted on going forward alone. In a single breath, as it seemed to her, she ran up the remaining stairs, unlocked the door, and entered the room. Her nerves were not sufficiently composed to allow of her making use of the *prie-dieu*. All she cared for just then was to get through her duty as quickly as possible, and return in safety to the world of living beings downstairs. She set her teeth, and by a supreme effort of will went through the small duty that was required of her steadily but swiftly. Her face was never turned away from the coffin the whole time; and when she had finished her task she walked backwards to the door, opened it, walked backwards out, and in another breath was downstairs, and safe in the protecting arms of Sister Agnes.

Next night she insisted upon going entirely alone, and made s

light of the matter that Sister Agnes no longer opposed her wish to make the midnight visit to the Black Room a part of her ordinary duty. But inwardly Janet could never quite overcome her secret awe of the room and its silent occupant. She always dreaded the coming of the hour that took her there, and when her task was over, she never closed the door without a feeling of relief. In this case, custom with her never bred familiarity. To the last occasion of her going there she went the prey of hidden fears—fears of she knew not what, which she derided to herself even while they made her their victim. There was a morbid thread running through the tissue of her nerves, which by intense force of will might be kept from growing and spreading, but which no effort of hers could quite pluck out or eradicate.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DAWN OF LOVE.

Major Strickland did not forget his promise to Janet. On the eighth morning after his return from London he walked over from Eastbury to Deepley Walls, saw Lady Chillington, and obtained leave of absence for Miss Hope for the day. Then he paid a flying visit to Sister Agnes, for whom he had a great reverence and admiration, and ended by carrying off Janet in triumph.

The park of Deepley Walls extends almost to the suburbs of Eastbury, a town of eight thousand inhabitants, but of such small commercial importance that the nearest railway station is three miles away across country and nearly five miles from Deepley Walls.

Major Strickland no longer resided at Rose Cottage, but at a pretty little villa just outside Eastbury. Some small accession of fortune had come to him by the death of a relative; and an addition to his family in the person of Aunt Félicité, a lady old and nearly blind, the widow of a kinsman of the Major. Besides its tiny lawn and flower-beds in front, the Lindens had a long stretch of garden ground behind, otherwise the Major would scarcely have been happy in his new home. He was secretary to the Eastbury Horticultural Society, and his fame as a grower of prize roses and geraniums was in these latter days far sweeter to him than any fame that had ever accrued to him as a soldier.

Janet found Aunt Félicité a most quaint and charming old lady, as cheerful and full of vivacity as many a girl of seventeen. She kissed Janet on both cheeks when the Major introduced her; asked whether she was fiancée; complimented her on her French; declaimed a passage from Racine; put her poodle through a variety of amusing tricks; and pressed Janet to assist at her luncheon of cream cheese, French roll, strawberries and white wine.

A slight sense of disappointment swept across Janet's mind, like the shadow of a cloud across a sunny field. She had been two hours

at the Lindens without having seen Captain George. In vain she told herself that she had come to spend the day with Major Strickland, and to be introduced to Aunt Félicité, and that nothing more was wanting to her complete contentment. That something more was needed she knew quite well, but she would not acknowledge it even to herself. He knew of her coming; he had been with Aunt Félicité only half an hour before—so much she learned within five minutes of her arrival; yet now, at the end of two hours, he had not condescended even to come and speak to her. She roused herself from the sense of despondency that was creeping over her and put on a gaiety that she was far from feeling. A very bitter sense of self-contempt was just then at work in her heart: she felt that never before had she despised herself so utterly. She took her hat in her hand, and put her arm within the Major's and walked with him round his little demesne. It was a walk that took up an hour or more, for there was much to see and learn, and Janet was bent this morning on having a long lesson in botany; and the old soldier was only too happy in having secured a listener so enthusiastic and appreciative to whom he could dilate on his favourite hobby.

But all this time Janet's eyes and ears were on the alert in a double sense of which the Major knew nothing. He was busy with a description of the last spring flower show, and how the Duke of Cheltenham's auriculas were by no means equal to those of Major Strickland, when Janet gave a little start as though a gnat had stung her, and bent to smell a sweet blush-rose, whose tints were rivalled by the sudden delicate glow that flushed her cheek.

"Yes, yes!" she said, hurriedly, as the Major paused for a moment; "and so the Duke's gardener was jealous because you carried away the prize?"

"I never saw a man more put out in my life," said the Major. "He shook his fist at my flowers and said before everybody, 'Let the old Major only wait till autumn and then see if my dahlias don't ——' But yonder comes Geordie. Bless my heart! what has he been doing at Eastbury all this time?"

Janet's instinct had not deceived her; she had heard and recognised his footstep a full minute before the Major knew that he was near She gave one quick, shy glance round as he opened the gate, and then she wandered a yard or two further down the path.

"Good-morning, uncle," said Captain George, as he came up. "You set out for Deepley Walls so early this morning that I did not see you before you started. I am glad to find that you did not come back alone."

Janet had turned as he began to speak, but did not come back to the Major's side. Captain George advanced a few steps and lifted his hat.

"Good-morning, Miss Hope," he said, with outstretched hand.

"I need hardly say how pleased I am to see you at the Lindens. My uncle has succeeded so well on his first embassy that we must send him again, and often, on the same errand."

Janet murmured a few words in reply—what, she could not afterwards have told; but as her eyes met his for a moment, she read in them something that made her forgive him on the spot, even while she declared to herself that she had nothing to forgive, and that brought to her cheek a second blush more vivid than the first.

"All very well, young gentleman," said the Major; "but you have not yet explained your four hours' absence. We shall order you under arrest unless you have some reasonable excuse to submit."

"The best of all excuses—that of urgent business," said the Captain.

"You! business!" said the laughing Major. "Why, it was only last night that you were bewailing your lot as being one of those unhappy mortals who have no work to do."

"To those they love, the gods lend patient hearing. I forget the Latin, but that does not matter just now. What I wish to convey is this—that I need no longer be idle unless I choose. I have found some work to do. Lend me your ears, both of you. About an hour after you, sir, had started for Deepley Walls, I received a note from the editor of the *Eastbury Courier*, in which he requested me to give him an early call. My curiosity prompted me to look in upon him as soon as breakfast was over. I found that he was brother to the editor of one of the London magazines—a gentleman whom I met one evening at a party in town. The London editor remembered me, and had written to the Eastbury editor to make arrangements with me for writing a series of magazine articles on India and my experiences there during the late mutiny. I need not bore you with details; it is sufficient to say that my objections were talked down one by one; and I left the office committed to a sixteen-page article by the sixth of next month."

"You an author!" exclaimed the Major. "I should as soon have thought of your enlisting in the Marines."

"It will only be for a few months, uncle—only till my limited stock of experiences shall be exhausted. After that I shall be relegated to my natural obscurity, doubtless never to emerge again."

"Hem," said the Major, nervously. "Geordie, my boy, I have by me one or two little poems which I wrote when I was about nineteen—trifles flung off on the inspiration of the moment. Perhaps, when you come to know your friend the editor better than you do now, you might induce him to bring them out—to find an odd corner for them in his magazine. I shouldn't want payment for them, you know. You might just mention that fact; and I assure you that I have seen many worse things than they are in print."

"What, uncle, you an author! Oh, fie! I should as soon have thought of your wishing to dance on the tight-rope as to appear in

print. But we must look over these little effusions—eh, Miss Hope We must unearth this genius, and be the first to give his lucubrations to the world."

"If you were younger, sir, or I not quite so old, I would box your ears," said the Major, who seemed hardly to know whether to laugh or be angry. Finally he laughed, George and Janet chimed in, and all three went back indoors.

After an early dinner the Major took rod and line and set off to capture a few trout for supper. Aunt Félicité took her post-prandial nap discreetly, in an easy-chair, and Captain George and Miss Hope were left to their own devices. In Love's sweet Castle of Indolence the hours that make up a summer afternoon pass like so many minutes. These two had blown the magic horn and had gone in. The gates of brass had closed behind them, shutting them up from the common outer world. Over all things was a glamour as of witchcraft. Soft music filled the air; soft breezes came to them as from fields of amaranth and asphodel. They walked ever in a magic circle, that widened before them as they went. Eros in passing had touched them with his golden dart. Each of them hid the sweet sting from the other, yet neither of them would have been whole again for anything the world could have offered. What need to tell the old old story over again—the story of the dawn of love in two young hearts that had never loved before?

Janet went home that night in a flutter of happiness—a happiness so sweet and strange and yet so vague that she could not have analysed it even had she been casuist enough to try to do so. But she was content to accept the fact as a fact; beyond that she cared nothing. No syllable of love had been spoken between her and George: they had passed what to an outsider would have seemed a very common-place afternoon. They had talked together—not sentiment, but every-day topics of the world around them; they had read together—poetry, but nothing more passionate than "Aurora Leigh;" they had walked together—rather a silent and stupid walk, our friendly outsider would have urged; but if they were content, no one else had any right to complain. And so the day had worn itself away—a red-letter day for ever in the calendar of their young lives.

CHAPTER XX.

THE NARRATIVE OF SERGEANT NICHOLAS.

ONE morning when Janet had been about three weeks at Deepley Walls, she was summoned to the door by one of the servants, and found there a tall, thin, middle-aged man, dressed in plain clothes, and having all the appearance of a discharged soldier.

"I have come a long way, miss," he said to Janet, carrying a finger

o his forehead, "in order to see Lady Chillington and have a little rivate talk with her."

"I am afraid that her ladyship will scarcely see you, unless you an give her some idea of the business that you have called upon."

"My name, miss, is Sergeant John Nicholas. I served formerly n India, where I was body-servant to her ladyship's son, Captain harles Chillington, who died there of cholera nearly twenty years go, and I have something of importance to communicate."

Janet made the old soldier come in and sit down in the hall while he took his message to Lady Chillington. Her ladyship was not et up, but was taking her chocolate in bed, with a faded Indian hawl thrown round her shoulders. She began to tremble violently he moment Janet delivered the old soldier's message, and could carcely set down her cup and saucer. Then she began to cry, and o kiss the hem of the Indian shawl. Janet went softly out of the oom and waited. She had never even heard of this Captain Charles hillington, and yet no mere empty name could have thus affected he stern mistress of Deepley Walls. Those few tears opened up uite a new view of Lady Chillington's character. Janet began to ee that there might be elements of tragedy in the old woman's life f which she knew nothing: that many of the moods which seemed o her so strange and inexplicable might be so merely for want of the ey by which alone they could be rightly read.

Presently her ladyship's gong sounded. Janet went back into the oom, and found her still sitting up in bed, sipping her chocolate ith a steady hand. All traces of tears had vanished: she looked ven more stern and repressed than usual.

"Request the person of whom you spoke to me a while ago to ait," she said. "I will see him at eleven in my private sitting-oom."

So Sergeant Nicholas was sent to get his breakfast in the ervants' room, and wait till Lady Chillington was ready to receive im.

At eleven precisely he was summoned to her ladyship's presence. he received him with stately graciousness, and waved him to a hair a yard or two away. She was dressed for the day in one of er stiff brocaded silks, and sat as upright as a dart, manipulating a mall fan. Miss Hope stood close at the back of her chair.

"So, my good man, I understand that you were acquainted with y son, the late Captain Chillington, who died in India twenty ears ago?"

"I was his body-servant for two years previous to his death."

"Were you with him when he died?"

"I was, your ladyship. These fingers closed his eyes."

The hand that held the fan began to tremble again. She remained lent for a few moments, and by a strong effort overmastered her gitation.

"You have some communication which you wish to make to me respecting my dead son?"

"I have, your ladyship. A communication of a very singular kind."

"Why has it not been made before now?"

"That your ladyship will learn in the course of what I have to say. But perhaps you will kindly allow me to tell my story my own way."

"By all means. Pray begin: I am all attention."

The Sergeant touched his forelock, gave a preliminary cough, fixed his clear grey eye on Lady Chillington, and began his narrative as under:—

"Your ladyship and miss: I, John Nicholas, a Staffordshire man born and bred, went out to India twenty-three years ago as lance-corporal in the hundred-and-first regiment of foot. After I had been in India a few months, I got drunk and misbehaved myself, and was reduced to the ranks. Well, ma'am, Captain Chillington took a fancy to me, thought I was not such a bad dog after all, and got me appointed as his servant. And a better master no man need ever wish to have—kind, generous, and a perfect gentleman from top to toe. I loved him, and would have gone through fire and water to serve him."

Her ladyship's fan was trembling again. "Oblige me with my salts, Miss Hope," she said. She pressed them to her nose, and motioned to the Sergeant to proceed.

"When I had been with the Captain a few months," resumed the old soldier, "he got leave of absence for several weeks, and everybody knew that it was his intention to spend his holiday in a shooting excursion among the hills. I was to go with him, of course, and the usual troop of native servants; but besides himself there was only one European gentleman in the party, and he was not an Englishman. He was a Russian, and his name was Platzoff. He was a gentleman of fortune, and was travelling in India at the time, and had come to my master with letters of introduction. Well, Captain Chillington just took wonderfully to him, and the two were almost inseparable. Perhaps it hardly becomes one like me to offer an opinion on such a point; but, knowing what afterwards happened, I must say that I never either liked or trusted that Russian from the day I first set eyes on him. He seemed to me too double-faced and cunning for an honest English gentleman to have much to do with. But he had travelled a great deal, and was very good company, which was perhaps the reason why Captain Chillington took so kindly to him. Be that as it may, however, it was decided that they should go on the hunting excursion together—not that the Russian was much of a shot, or cared a great deal about hunting, but because, as I heard him say, he liked to see all kinds of life, and tiger-stalking was something quite fresh to him.

"He was a curious-looking gentleman, too, that Russian—just the sort of face that you would never forget after once seeing it, with skin that was dried and yellow like parchment; black hair that was trained into a heavy curl on the top of his forehead, and a big hooked nose.

"Well, your ladyship and miss, away we went with our elephants and train of servants, and very pleasantly we spent our two months' leave of absence. The Captain he shot tigers, and the Russian he did his best at pig-sticking. Our last week had come, and in three more days we were to set off on our return, when that terrible misfortune happened which deprived me of the best of masters, and your ladyship of the best of sons.

"Early one morning I was roused by Rung Budruck, the Captain's favourite sycee or groom. 'Get up at once,' he said, shaking me by the shoulder. 'The sahib Captain is very ill. The black devil has seized him. He must have opium or he will die.' I ran at once to the Captain's tent, and as soon as I set eyes on him I saw that he had been seized with cholera. I went off at once and fetched M. Platzoff. We had nothing in the way of medicine with us except brandy and opium. Under the Russian's directions these were given to my poor master in large quantities, but he grew gradually worse. Rung and I in everything obeyed M. Platzoff, who seemed to know quite well what ought to be done in such cases; and to tell the truth, your ladyship, he seemed as much put about as if the Captain had been his own brother. Well, the Captain grew weaker as the day went on, and towards evening it grew quite clear that he could not last much longer. The pain had left him by this time, but he was so frightfully reduced that we could not bring him round. He was lying in every respect like one already dead, except for his faint breathing, when the Russian left the tent for a moment, and I took his place at the head of the bed. Rung was standing with folded arms a yard or two away. None of the other native servants could be persuaded to enter the tent, so frightened were they of catching the complaint. Suddenly my poor master opened his eyes, and his lips moved. I put my ear to his mouth. 'The diamond,' he whispered. 'Take it—mother—give my love.' Not a word more on earth, your ladyship. His limbs stiffened; his head fell back; he gave a great sigh and died. I gently closed the eyes that could see no more, and left the tent crying.

"Your ladyship, we buried Captain Chillington by torchlight four hours later. We dug his grave deep in a corner of the jungle, and there we left him to his last sleep. Over his grave we piled a heap of stones, as I have read that they used to do in the old times over the grave of a chief. It was all we could do.

"About an hour later M. Platzoff came to me. 'I shall start before daybreak for Chinapore,' he said, 'with one elephant and a couple of men. I will take with me the news of my poor friend's

untimely fate, and you can come on with the luggage and other effects in the ordinary way. You will find me at Chinapore when you reach there.' Next morning I found that he was gone.

"What my dear master had said with his last breath about a diamond puzzled me. I could only conclude that amongst his effects there must be some valuable stone of which he wished special care to be taken, and which he desired to be sent home to you, madam, in England. I knew nothing of any such stone, and I considered it beyond my position to search for it among his luggage. I decided that when I got to Chinapore I would give his message to the Colonel, and leave that gentleman to take such steps in the matter as he might think best.

"I had hardly settled all this in my mind when Rung Budruck came to me. 'The Russian sahib has gone: I have something to tell you,' he said, only he spoke in broken English. 'Yesterday, just after the sahib Captain was dead, the Russian came back. You had left the tent, and I was sitting on the ground behind the Captain's big trunk, the lid of which was open. I was sitting with my chin in my hand, very sad at heart, when the Russian came in. He looked carefully round the tent. Me he could not see, but I could see him through the opening between the hinges of the box. What did he do? He unfastened the bosom of the sahib Captain's shirt, and then he drew over the Captain's head the steel chain with the little gold box hanging to it that he always wore. He opened the box, and saw there was that in it which he expected to find there. Then he hid away both chain and box in one of his pockets, rebuttoned the dead man's shirt, and left the tent.' 'But you have not told me what there was in the box,' I said. He put the tips of his fingers together and smiled: 'In that box was the Great Hara Diamond!'

"Your ladyship, I was so startled when Rung said this that the wind of a bullet would have knocked me down. A new light was all at once thrown on the Captain's dying words. 'But how do you know, Rung, that the box contained a diamond?' I asked when I had partly got over my surprise. He smiled again, with that strange slow smile which those fellows have. 'It matters not how, but Rung knew that the diamond was there. He had seen the Captain open the box, and take it out and look at it many a time when the Captain thought no one could see him. He could have stolen it from him almost any night when he was asleep, but that was left for his friend to do.' 'Was the diamond you speak of a very valuable one?' I asked. 'It was a green diamond of immense value,' answered Rung; 'it was called *The Great Hara* because of its colour, and it was first worn by the terrible Aureng-Zebe himself, who had it set in the haft of his scimitar.' 'But by what means did Captain Chillington become possessed of so valuable a stone?' Said he, 'Two years ago, at the risk of his own life, he rescued the eldest son of the Rajah of Gondulpoor from a tiger who had carried away the child into the jungle. The

Rajah is one of the richest men in India, and he showed his gratitude by secretly presenting the Great Hara Diamond to the man who had saved the life of his child.' 'But why should Captain Chillington carry so valuable a stone about his person?' I asked. 'Would it not have been wiser to deposit it in the bank at Bombay till such time as the Captain could take it with him to England?' 'The stone is a charmed stone,' said Rung, 'and it was the Rajah's particular wish that the sahib Chillington should always wear it about his person. So long as he did so he could not come to his death by fire, by water, or by sword thrust.' Said I, 'But how did the Russian know that Captain Chillington carried the diamond about his person?' 'One night when the Captain had had too much wine he showed the diamond to his friend,' answered Rung. Said I, 'But how does it happen, Rung, that you know this?' Rung, smiling and putting his finger tips together, replied, 'How does it happen that I know so much about you?' And then he told me a lot of things about myself that I thought no soul in India knew. It was just wonderful how he did it. 'So it is: let that be sufficient,' he finished by saying. 'Why did you not tell me till after the Russian had gone away that you saw him steal the diamond?' said I. 'If you had told me at the time I could have charged him with it.' 'You are ignorant,' said Rung; 'you are little more than a child. The Russian sahib had the evil eye. Had I crossed his purpose before his face he would have cursed me while he looked at me, and I should have withered away and died. He has got the diamond, and only by magic can it ever be recovered from him.'

"Your ladyship and miss, I hope I am not tedious nor wandering from the point. It will be sufficient to say that when I got down to Chinapore I found that M. Platzoff had indeed been there, but only just long enough to see the Colonel and give him an account of Captain Chillington's death, after which he had at once engaged a palanquin and bearers and set out with all speed for Bombay. It was now my turn to see the Colonel, and after I had given over into his hands all my dead master's property that I had brought with me from the Hills, I told him the story of the diamond as Rung had told it to me. He was much struck by it, and ordered me to take Rung to him the next morning. But that very night Rung disappeared, and was never seen in the camp again. Whether he was frightened at what he called the Russian's evil eye—frightened that Platzoff could blight him even from a distance, I have no means of knowing. In any case, gone he was; and from that day to this I have never set eyes on him. Well, the Colonel said he would take a note of what I had told him about the diamond, and that I must leave the matter entirely in his hands.

"Your ladyship, a fortnight after that the Colonel shot himself.

"To make short a long story—we got a fresh Colonel, and were removed to another part of the country; and there, a few weeks

later, I was knocked down by fever, and was a long time before I thoroughly recovered my strength. A year or two later our regiment was ordered back to England, but a day or two before we should have sailed I had a letter telling me that my old sweetheart was dead. This news seemed to take all care for life out of me, and on the spur of the moment I volunteered into a regiment bound for China, in which country war was just breaking out. There, and at other places abroad, I stopped till just four months ago, when I was finally discharged, with my pension, and a bullet in my pocket that had been taken out of my skull. I only landed in England nine days ago, and as soon as it was possible for me to do so, I came to see your ladyship. And I think that is all." The Sergeant's forefinger went to his forehead again as he brought his narrative to an end.

Lady Chillington kept on fanning herself in silence for a little while after the old soldier had done speaking. Her features wore the proud, impassive look that they generally put on when before strangers: in the present case they were no index to the feelings at work underneath. At length she spoke.

"After the suicide of your Colonel did you mention the supposed robbery of the diamond to anyone else?"

"To no one else, your ladyship. For several reasons. I was unaware what steps he might have taken between the time of my telling him and the time of his death to prove or disprove the truth of the story. In the second place, Rung had disappeared. I could only tell the story at secondhand. It had been told me by an eye-witness, but that witness was a native, and the word of a native does not go for much in those parts. In the third place, the Russian had also disappeared, and had left no trace behind. What could I do? Had I told the story to my new Colonel, I should mayhap only have been scouted as a liar or a madman. Besides, we were every day expecting to be ordered home, and I had made up my mind that I would at once come and see your ladyship. At that time I had no intention of going to China, and when once I got there it was too late to speak out. But through all the years I have been away my poor dear master's last words have lived in my memory. Many a thousand times have I thought of them both day and night, and prayed that I might live to get back to Old England, if it was only to give your ladyship the message with which I had been charged."

"But why could you not write to me?" asked Lady Chillington.

"Your ladyship, I am no scholar," answered the old soldier, with a vivid blush. "What I have told you to-day in half-an-hour would have taken me years to set down—in fact, I could never have done it."

"So be it," said Lady Chillington. "My obligation to you is all the greater for bearing in mind for so many years my poor boy's last message, and for being at so much trouble to deliver it." She sighed deeply and rose from her chair. The Sergeant rose too, thinking that

is interview was at an end, but at her ladyship's request he reseated imself.

Rejecting Janet's proffered arm, which she was in the habit of aning on in her perambulations about the house and grounds, Lady hillington walked slowly and painfully out of the room. Presently e returned, carrying an open letter in her hand. Both the ink and e paper on which it was written were faded and yellow with age.

"This is the last letter I ever received from my son," said her dyship. "I have preserved it religiously, and it bears out very ngularly what you, Sergeant, have just told me respecting the mes- ge which my darling sent me with his dying breath. In a few lines the end he makes mention of a something of great value which he going to bring home with him; but he writes about it in such arded terms that I never could satisfy myself as to the precise eaning of what he intended to convey. You, Miss Hope, will per- ps be good enough to read the lines in question aloud. They are ntained in a postscript."

Janet took the letter with reverent tenderness. Lady Chillington's mbling fingers pointed out the lines she was to read. Janet read under:—

"P.S.—I have reserved my most important bit of news till the t, as lady correspondents are said to do. Observe, I write 'are d to do,' because in this matter I have very little personal experi- ce of my own to go upon. You, dear mum, are my solitary y correspondent, and postscripts are a luxury in which you ely indulge. But to proceed, as the novelists say. Some two rs ago it was my good fortune to rescue a little yellow-skinned ncekin from the clutches of a very fine young tiger (my feet are on hide at this present writing), who was carrying him off as a tit-bit his supper. He was terribly mauled, you may be sure, but his ple followed my advice in their mode of doctoring him, and he dually got round again. The lad's father is a Rajah, immensely , and a direct descendant of that ancient Mogul dynasty which e ruled this country with a rod of iron. The Rajah has daughters umerable, but only this one son. His gratitude for what I had e was unbounded. A few weeks ago he gave me a most astound- proof of it. By a secret and trusty messenger he sent me—— no, dear mum, I will not tell you what the Rajah sent me. This er might chance to fall into other hands than yours (Indian letters *sometimes* miscarry), and the secret is one which had better be t in the family—at least for the present. So, mother mine, your osity must rest unsatisfied for a little while to come. I hope to with you before many months are over, and then you shall know ything.

The value of the Rajah's present is something immense. I shall it when I get to England, and out of the proceeds I shall——

well, I don't exactly know what I shall do. Purchase my next step for one thing, but that will cost a mere trifle. Then, perhaps, buy a comfortable estate in the country, or a house in Park Lane. Your six weeks every season in London lodgings was always inexplicable to me.

"Or shall I not sell the Rajah's present, but offer myself in marriage to some fair princess, with my heart in one hand and the G.H.D. in the other? Madder things than that are recorded in history. In any case, don't forget to pray for the safe arrival of your son, and (if such a petition is allowable) that he may not fail to bring with him the G.H.D.

"C. C."

"I never could understand before to-day what the letters G.H.D. were meant for," said Lady Chillington, as Janet gave her back the letter. "It is now quite evident that they were intended for *Great Hara Diamond;* all of which, as I said before, is confirmatory of the story you have just told me. Of course, after the lapse of so many years, there is not the remotest possibility of recovering the diamond; but my obligation to you, Sergeant Nicholas, is in no wise lessened by that fact. What are your engagements? Are you obliged to leave here immediately, or can you remain a short time in the neighbourhood?"

"I can give your ladyship a week, or even a fortnight, if you wish it."

"I am greatly obliged to you. I do wish it—I wish to talk to you respecting my son, and you are the only one now living who can tell me about him. You shall find that I am not ungrateful for what you have done for me. In the meantime, you will stop at the King's Arms, in Eastbury. Miss Hope will give you a note to the landlord. Come up here to-morrow at eleven. And now I must say good morning. I am not very strong, and your news has shaken me a little. Will you do me the honour of shaking hands with me? It was your hands that closed my poor boy's eyes—that touched him last on earth; let those hands now be touched by his mother."

Lady Chillington stood up and extended both her withered hands. The old soldier came forward with a blush and took them respectfully, tenderly. He bent his head and touched each of them in turn with his lips. Tears stood in his eyes.

"God bless you, Sergeant Nicholas! You are a good man and a true gentleman," said Lady Chillington. Then she turned and slowly left the room.

CHAPTER XXI.

COUNSEL TAKEN WITH MR. MADGIN.

After her interview with Sergeant Nicholas, Lady Chillington dismissed Janet for the day, and retired to her own rooms, nor was she seen out of them till the following morning. No one was admitted to see her save Dance. Janet, after sitting with Sister Agnes all the afternoon, went down at dusk to the housekeeper's room.

"Whatever did you do to her ladyship this morning?" asked Dance as soon as she entered. "She has tasted neither bit nor sup since breakfast, but ever since that old shabby-looking fellow went away she has lain on the sofa, staring at the wall as if there was some writing on it she was trying to read but didn't know how. I thought she was ill, and asked her if I should send for the doctor. She laughed at me without taking her eyes off the wall, and bade me begone for an old fool. If there's not a change by morning, I shall just send for the doctor without asking her leave. Surely you and that old fellow have bewitched her ladyship between you."

Janet in reply told Dance all that had passed at the morning's interview, feeling quite sure that in doing so she was violating no confidence, and that Lady Chillington herself would be the first to tell everything to her faithful old servant as soon as she should be sufficiently composed to do so. As a matter of course Dance was full of wonder.

"Did you know Captain Chillington?" asked Janet, as soon as the old dame's surprise had in some measure toned itself down.

"Did I know curly-pated, black-eyed Master Charley?" asked the old woman. "Ay—who better? These arms, withered and yellow now, then plump and strong, held him before he had been an hour in the world. The day he left England I went with her ladyship to see him aboard ship. As he shook me by the hand for the last time he said, 'You will never leave my mother, will you, Dance?' And I said, 'Never, while I live, dear Master Charles,' and I've kept my word."

"Her ladyship has never been like the same woman since she heard the news of his death," resumed Dance after a pause. "It seemed to sour her and harden her, and make her altogether different. There had been a great deal of unhappiness at home for some years before he went away. He and his father, Sir John—he that now lies so quiet upstairs—had a terrible quarrel just after Master Charles went into the army, and it was a quarrel that was never made up in this world. He was an awful man—Sir John—a wicked man: pray that such a one may never cross your path. The only happiness he seemed to have on earth was in making those over whom he had any

power miserable. It was impossible for my lady to love him, but she tried to do her duty by him till he and Master Charles fell out. What the quarrel was about I never rightly understood, but my lady would have it that Master Charles was in the right and her husband in the wrong. One result was that Sir John stopped the income that he had always allowed his son, and took a frightful oath that if Master Charles were dying of starvation before his eyes he would not give him as much as a penny to buy bread with. But her ladyship, who had money in her own right, said that Master Charles's income should go on as usual. Then she and Sir John quarrelled; and she left him and came to live at Deepley Walls, leaving him at Dene Folly; and here she stayed till Sir John was taken with his last illness and sent for her. He sent for her, not to make up the quarrel, but to jibe and sneer at her, and to make her wait on him day and night, as if she were a paid nurse from a hospital. While this was going on, and after Sir John had been quite given up by the doctors, news came from India of Master Charles's death. Well, her ladyship went nigh distracted; but as for the baronet, it was said, though I won't vouch for the truth of it, that he only laughed when the news was told him, and said that if he was plagued as much with corns in the next world as he had been in this, he should find Master Charles's arm very useful to lean upon. Two days later he died, and the title, and Dene Folly with it, went to a far-away cousin, whom neither Sir John nor his wife had ever seen. Then it was found how the baronet had contrived that his spite should outlive him—for only out of spite and mean cruelty could he have made such a will as he did make: that Deepley Walls should not become her ladyship's absolute property till the end of twenty years, during the whole of which time his body was to remain unburied, and to be kept under the same roof with his widow, wherever she might live. The mean, paltry scoundrel! Perhaps her ladyship might have had the will set aside, but she would not go to law about it. Thank Heaven! the twenty years are nearly at an end. Deepley Walls has been a haunted house ever since that midnight when Sir John was borne in on the shoulders of six strong men. And now tell me whether her ladyship is not a woman to be pitied."

At a quarter before eleven next morning, Mr. Solomon Madgin, Lady Chillington's agent and general man-of business, arrived by appointment at Deepley Walls. Mr. Madgin was indispensable to her ladyship, who had a considerable quantity of house property in and around Eastbury, consisting chiefly of small tenements, the rents of which had to be collected weekly. Then Mr. Madgin was bailiff for the Deepley Walls estate, in connection with which were several small farms or "holdings" which required to be well looked after in many ways. Besides all this, her ladyship, having a few spare thousands, had taken of late years to dabbling in scrip and

shares in a small way, and under the skilful pilotage of Mr. Madgin had hitherto contrived to steer clear of those rocks and shoals of speculation on which so many gallant argosies are wrecked. In short, everything except the law-business of the estate filtered through Mr. Madgin's hands, and as he did his work cheaply and well, and put up with her ladyship's ill-temper without a murmur, the mistress of Deepley Walls could hardly have found anyone who would have suited her better.

Mr. Solomon Madgin was a little dried-up man, about sixty years old. His tail-coat and vest of rusty black were of the fashion of twenty years ago. He wore drab trousers, and shoes tied with bows of black ribbon. His head, bald on the crown, had an ample fringe of white hair at the back and sides, and was covered, when he went abroad, with a beaver hat, very fluffy and much too tall for him, and which, once upon a time, had probably been nearly as white as his hair, but was now time-worn and weather-stained to one uniform and consistent drab. Round his neck he always wore a voluminous cravat of unstarched muslin fastened in front with an old-fashioned pearl brooch, above which protruded the two spiked points of a very stiff and pugnacious-looking collar. A strong alpaca umbrella, unfashionably corpulent, was his constant companion. Mr. Madgin's whiskers were shaved off in an exact line with the end of his nose. His eyebrows were very white and bushy, and could serve on occasion as a screen to the greenish, crafty-looking eyes below them, which never liked to be peered into too closely. The ordinary expression of his thin, dried-up face was one of hard, worldly shrewdness; but there was a lurking bonhommie in his smile which seemed to imply that, away from business, he might possibly mellow into a boon companion.

Mr. Madgin had to wait a few minutes this morning before Lady Chillington could receive him. When he was ushered into her sitting-room he was surprised to find that she and Miss Hope were not alone; that a plainly-dressed man, who looked almost as old as Mr. Madgin himself, was seated at the table. After one suspicious glance at the stranger, Mr. Madgin made his bow to the ladies and walked up to the table with his bag of papers.

"You can put all those things away for the day, Mr. Madgin," said her ladyship. "A far more important matter claims our attention just now. In the first place I must introduce to you Sergeant Nicholas, many years ago servant to my son, Captain Chillington, who died in India. (Sergeant, this is Mr. Madgin, my man of business.) The Sergeant, who has only just returned to England, told me yesterday a very curious story which I am desirous that he should repeat in your presence to-day. The story relates to a diamond of great value, said to have been stolen from the body of my son immediately after death, and I shall require you to give me your opinion as to the feasibility of its recovery. You will take such notes

of the narrative as you may think necessary, and the Sergeant will afterwards answer, to the best of his ability, any questions you may choose to put to him." Then turning to the old soldier, she added: "You will be good enough, Sergeant, to repeat to Mr. Madgin such parts of your narrative of yesterday as have any reference to the diamond. Begin with my son's dying message. Repeat, word for word, as closely as you can remember, all that was told you by the sycee Rung. Describe as minutely as possible the personal appearance of M. Platzoff; and detail any other points that bear on the loss of the diamond."

So the Sergeant began, but the repetition of a long narrative not learnt by heart is by no means an easy matter, especially when they to whom it was first told hear it for the second time, but rather as critics than as ordinary listeners. Besides, the taking of notes was a process that smacked of a court-martial and tended to flurry the narrator, making him feel as if he were upon his oath and liable to be browbeat by the counsel for the other side. He was heartily glad when he got to the end of what he had to tell. The postscript to Captain Chillington's letter was then read by Miss Hope.

Mr. Madgin took copious notes as the Sergeant went on, and afterwards put a few questions to him on different points which he thought not sufficiently clear. Then he laid down his pen, rubbed his hands, and ran his fingers through his scanty hair. Lady Chillington rang for her butler, and gave the Sergeant into his keeping, knowing that he could not be in better hands. Then she said: "I will leave you, Mr. Madgin, for half-an-hour. Go carefully through your notes, and let me have your opinion when I come back as to whether, after so long a time, you think it worth while to institute any proceedings for the recovery of the diamond."

So Mr. Madgin was left alone with what he called his "considering cap." As soon as the door was closed behind her ladyship, he tilted back his chair, stuck his feet on the table, buried his hands deep in his pockets and shut his eyes, and so remained for full five-and-twenty minutes. He was busy consulting his notes when Lady Chillington re-entered the room. Mr. Madgin began at once.

"I must confess," he said, "that the case which your ladyship has submitted to me seems, from what I can see of it at present, to be surrounded with difficulties. Still, I am far from counselling your ladyship to despair entirely. The few points which, at the first glance, present themselves as requiring solution are these:—Who was the M. Platzoff who is said to have stolen the diamond? and what position in life did he really occupy? Is he alive or dead? If alive, where is he now living? If he did really steal the diamond, are not the chances as a hundred to one that he disposed of it long ago? But even granting that we were in a position to answer all these questions; suppose, even, that this M. Platzoff were living in Eastbury at the present moment, and that fact were known to us,

how much nearer should we be to the recovery of the diamond than we are now? Your ladyship must please to bear in mind that as the case is now we have not an inch of legal ground to stand upon. We have no evidence that would be worth a rush in a court of law that M. Platzoff really purloined the diamond. We have no trustworthy evidence that the diamond itself ever had an existence."

"Surely, Mr. Madgin, my son's letter is sufficient to prove that fact."

"Sufficient, perhaps, in conjunction with the other evidence, to prove it in a moral sense, but certainly not in a legal one," said Mr. Madgin, quietly but decisively. "Your ladyship must please to bear in mind that Captain Chillington in his letter makes no absolute mention of the diamond by name; he merely writes of it vaguely under certain initials, and, if called upon, how could you prove that he intended those initials to stand for the words *Great Hara Diamond*, and not for something altogether different? If M. Platzoff were your ladyship's next-door neighbour, and you knew for certain that he had the diamond still in his possession, you could only get it from him as he himself got it from your son—by subterfuge and artifice. Your ladyship will please to observe that I have put forward no opinion on the case. I have merely offered a statement of plain facts as they show themselves on the surface. With those facts before you it rests with your ladyship to decide what further steps you wish taken in the matter."

"My good Madgin, do you know what it is to hate?" demanded Lady Chillington. "To hate with a hatred that dwarfs all other passions of the soul, and makes them pigmies by comparison? If you know this, you know the feeling with which I regard M. Platzoff. If you want the key to the feeling, you have it in the fact that his accursed hands robbed my dead son: even then you must have a mother's heart to feel all that I feel." She paused for a moment as if to recover breath; then she resumed. "See you, Mr. Solomon Madgin; I have a conviction, an intuition, call it what you will, that this Russian scoundrel is still alive. That is the first fact you have to find out. The next is, where he is now residing. Then you will have to ascertain whether he has the diamond still in his possession, and if so, by what means it can be recovered. Only recover it for me—I ask not how or by what means—only put into my hands the diamond that was stolen off my son's breast as he lay dead; and the day you do that, my good Madgin, I will present you with a cheque for five thousand pounds!"

Mr. Madgin sat as one astounded; the power of reply seemed taken from him.

"Go, now," said Lady Chillington, after a few moments. "Ordinary business is out of the question to-day. Go home and carefully digest what I have just said to you. That you are a man of resources, I know well; had you not been so, I would not have employed you

in this matter. Come to me to-morrow, next day, next week—when you like; only don't come barren of ideas; don't come without a plan, likely or unlikely, of some sort of a campaign."

Mr. Madgin rose and swept his papers mechanically into his bag. "Your ladyship said five thousand pounds, if I mistake not?" he stammered out.

"A cheque for five thousand pounds shall be yours on the day you bring me the diamond. Is not my word sufficient, or do you wish to have it under bond and seal?" she asked with some hauteur.

"Your ladyship's word is an all-sufficient bond," answered Mr. Madgin, with sweet humility. He paused, with the handle of the door in his hand. "Supposing I were to see my way to carrying out your ladyship's wishes in this respect," he said deferentially, "or even to carrying out a portion of them only, still it could not be done without expense—not without considerable expense, maybe."

"I give you carte-blanche as regards expenses," said her ladyship with decision.

Then Mr. Madgin gave a farewell duck of the head and went. He took his way homeward through the park like a man walking in his sleep. With wide-open eyes and hat well set on the back of his head, with his blue bag in one hand and his umbrella under his arm, he trudged onward, even after he had reached the busy streets of the little town, without seeing anything or anyone. What he saw, he saw introspectively. On the one hand glittered the tempting bait held out by Lady Chillington; on the other loomed the dark problem that had to be solved before he could call the golden apple his.

"The most arrant wild-goose chase that ever I heard of in all my life," he muttered to himself, as he halted at his own door. "Not a single ray of light anywhere—not one."

"Popsey," he called out to his daughter, when he was inside, "bring me the decanter of whisky, some cold water, my tobacco-jar and a new churchwarden into the office; and don't let me be disturbed by anyone for four hours."

(*To be continued.*)

ON LETTER-WRITING.

IT is a matter of common remark that the epistolary art has been killed by the penny post, not to speak of post-cards.

This is a result which was hardly anticipated by Sir Rowland Hill, when, in the face of many obstacles, he carried his great scheme; and certainly it did not dwell very vividly before the mind of Mr. Elihu Burritt, the learned blacksmith, when he travelled over England, speaking there, as he had already done in America, in favour of an ocean penny postage.

It is urged that in the old days when postage was dear, and "franks" were difficult to procure, and when the poor did not correspond at all, writers were very careful to write well and to say the very best they could in the best possible way—to make their letters, in a word, worthy of the expense incurred. But those who argue on this ground leave out of consideration one little fact.

The classes to whom English literature is indebted for the epistolary samples on which reliance is placed for proof of this proposition, very seldom indeed paid for the conveyance of the letters in question. The system of "franking"—by which the privileged classes got not only their letters carried, but a great deal too often their dressing-cases and bandboxes as well—grew into a most serious grievance; so serious indeed that the opposition for a long period carried on against cheap postage arose solely from over nice regard to the vested interests of those who could command a little favour from a Peer, a Member of Parliament, or an official of high rank, not to speak of those patriotic worthies themselves.

The fact may thus be made to cut two ways.

From our point of view, it may be cited in direct denial of the conclusion that people wrote well in past days simply because the conveyance of their letters was costly. We believe that the mass wrote just as badly and loosely then as the mass do now, in fact that they were rather loose on rules of spelling; and that the specimens preserved and presented to us in type are exceptional, and escaped destruction with the mass precisely because they were exceptional.

Other circumstances may be taken to account for the loose epistolary style or rather no-style now so common; and this refers us to the general question of education—more especially the education of women. In those days the few were educated; and to be educated was regarded as the distinctive mark of a leisured and cultivated class: now, education is general, but, like many other things, it has suffered in the process of diffusion, whether or not it may in the long run suffer by the diffusion itself.

The truth is, time alone can tell whether among the select

nowadays the epistolary art is not simply as perfect as it was in days past; at all events we believe so, and proceed to set down a few reflections on letter-writing.

To write a really good letter, two things in especial are demanded. The first is, that you write only of that which is either familiar to you or in which you have some interest; and in the next, that you can write with ease, and on a footing of freedom as regards your correspondent. "The pen," says Cervantes, "is the tongue of the mind," and in no form of composition is this more strictly true than of letters. In a certain degree a letter should share the characteristics of good conversation: the writer must realise the presence and the mood of the person for whom the letter is destined. Just as good-breeding suggests that you must have the tastes and sentiments of your interlocutor before you for ends of enjoyable conversation, and that, within the limits of propriety and self-respect, you should at once humour them and use them; so in good letter-writing you must write for your correspondent's pleasure as well as please, by merely communicating, yourself.

Here comes in the delightful element of vicarious sympathy, or dramatic transference, which, brought into play successfully, with some degree of wit and sprightliness of expression, may raise letter-writing to the level of a fine art.

And this allowed, it is clear that letters may just be as good now as at any former period, and accidental circumstances have really little to do with it. Humboldt has well said that "A letter is a conversation between the present and the absent. Its fate is that it cannot last, but must pass away like the sound of the voice."

And just as in conversation all attempt at eloquence and personal celebration in this kind is rigidly proscribed, so in letter-writing are all kinds of fine-writing and rhetoric. "Brilliant speakers and writers," it has been well said, "should remember that coach wheels are better than Catherine wheels to travel on." One's first business in letter-writing is to say what one has to say, and the second to say it well and with taste and ease.

A. H. Japp, LL.D.

THE SILENT CHIMES.

SILENT FOR EVER.

BREAKFAST was on the table in Mr. Hamlyn's house in Bryanstone Square, and Mrs. Hamlyn waited, all impatience, for her lord and master. Not in any particular impatience for the meal itself, but that she might "have it out with him"—the phrase was hers, not mine, as you will see presently—in regard to the perplexity existing in her mind connected with the strange appearance of the damsel watching the house, in her beauty and her pale golden hair.

Why had Philip Hamlyn turned sick and faint—to judge by his changing countenance—when she had charged him at dinner, the previous evening, with knowing something of this mysterious woman? Mysterious in her actions, at all events; probably in herself. Mrs. Hamlyn wanted to know that. No further opportunity had then been given for pursuing the subject. Japhet had returned to the room, and before the dinner was at an end, some acquaintance of Mr. Hamlyn had fetched him out for the evening. And he came home with so fearful a headache that he had lain groaning and turning all through the night. Mrs. Hamlyn was not a model of patience, but in all her life she had never felt so impatient as now.

He came into the room looking pale and shivery; a sure sign that he was suffering; that it was not an invented excuse. Yes, the pain was better, he said, in answer to his wife's question; and might be much better after a strong cup of tea; he could not imagine what had brought it on. *She* could have told him though, had she been gifted with the magical power of reading minds, and have seen the nervous apprehension that was making havoc with his.

Mrs. Hamlyn gave him his tea in silence, and buttered a dainty bit of toast to tempt him to eat. But he shook his head.

"I cannot, Eliza. Nothing but tea this morning."

"I am sorry you are ill," she said, by-and-by. "I fear it hurts you to talk; but I want to have it out with you."

"Have it out with me!" cried he, in real or feigned surprise. "Have what out with me?"

"Oh, you know, Philip. About that woman who has been watching the house these two days; evidently watching for you."

"But I told you I knew nothing about her: who she is, or what she is, or what she wants. I really do not know."

Well, so far that was true. But all the while a sick fear lay on

his heart that he did know; or, rather, that he was destined to know very shortly.

"When I told you her hair was like threads of fine, pale gold, you seemed to start, Philip, as if you knew some girl or woman with such hair, or had known her."

"I daresay I have known a score of women with such hair. My dear little sister who died, for instance."

"Do not attempt to evade the subject," was the haughty reprimand. "If ——"

Mrs. Hamlyn's sharp speech was interrupted by the entrance of Japhet, bringing in the morning letters. Only one letter, however, for they were not as numerous in those days as they are in these.

"It seems to be important, ma'am," Japhet remarked, with the privilege of an old servant, as he handed it to his mistress. She saw it was from Leet Hall, in Mrs. Carradyne's handwriting, and bore the words: "In haste," above the address.

Tearing it open, Eliza Hamlyn read the short, sad news it contained. Captain Monk had been taken suddenly ill with inward inflammation. Mr. Speck feared the worst, and the Captain had asked for Eliza. Would she come down at once?

"Oh, Philip, I must not lose a minute," she exclaimed, passing the letter to him, and forgetting the pale gold hair and its owner. "Do you know anything about the Worcestershire trains?"

"No," he answered. "The better plan will be to get to the station as soon as possible, and then you will be ready for the first train that starts."

"Will you go down with me, Philip?"

"I cannot. I will take you to the station."

"Why can't you?"

"Because I cannot just now leave London. My dear, you may believe me, for it is the truth. I *cannot do so*. I wish I could."

And she saw it was true: for his tone was so earnest as to tell of pain.

Making what haste she could, kissing her boy a hundred times, and recommending him to the special care of his nurse and of his father during her absence, she drove with her husband to the station, and was just in time for a train. Mr. Hamlyn watched it steam out of the station, and then looked up at the clock.

"I suppose it's not too early to see him," he muttered. "I'll chance it, at any rate. Hope he will be less suffering than he was yesterday, and less crusty, too."

Dismissing his carriage, for he felt more inclined to walk than to drive, he went through the park to Pimlico, and gained the house of Major Pratt.

This was Friday. On the previous Wednesday evening a note had been brought to Mr. Hamlyn by Major Pratt's servant, a sentence in which, as the reader may remember, ran as follows:

"I suppose there was no mistake in the report that that ship did go down—and that none of the passengers were saved from it?"

This puzzled Philip Hamlyn: perhaps somewhat troubled him in a hazy kind of way. For he could only suppose that the ship alluded to must be the sailing vessel in which his first wife, false and faithless, and his little son of a twelvemonth old had been lost some five or six years ago—the *Clipper of the Seas.* And the next day, (Thursday) he had gone to Major Pratt's, as requested, to carry the prescription for gout he had asked for, and also to inquire of the Major what he meant.

But the visit was a fruitless one. Major Pratt was in bed with an attack of gout, so ill and so "crusty" that nothing could be got out of him excepting a few bad words and as many groans. Mr. Hamlyn then questioned Saul—of whom he used to see a good deal in India, for he had been the Major's servant for years and years.

"Do you happen to know, Saul, whether the Major wanted me for anything in particular? He asked me to call here this morning."

Saul began to consider. He was a tall, thin, cautious, slow-speaking man, honest as the day, and very much attached to his master.

"Well, sir, he got a letter yesterday morning that seemed to put him out, for I found him swearing over it. And he said he'd like you to see it."

"Who was the letter from? What was it about?"

"It looked like Miss Caroline's writing, sir, and the postmark was Essex. As to what it was about—well, the Major didn't directly tell me, but I gathered that it might be about——"

"About what?" questioned Mr Hamlyn, for the man had come to a dead standstill. "Speak out, Saul."

"Then, sir," said Saul, slowly rubbing the top of his head, and the few grey hairs left on it, "I thought—as you tell me to speak—it must be something concerning that ship you know of; she that went down on her voyage home, Mr. Philip."

"The *Clipper of the Seas?*"

"Just so, sir; the *Clipper of the Seas.* I thought it by this," added Saul: "that pretty nigh all day afterwards he talked of nothing but that ship, asking me if I should suppose it possible that the ship had not gone down and every soul on board, leastways of her passengers, with her. 'Master,' said I, in answer, 'had that ship not gone down and all her passengers with her, rely upon it, they'd have turned up long before this.' 'Ay, ay,' stormed he, 'and Caroline's a fool.'—Which of course meant his sister, you know, sir."

Philip Hamlyn could not make much of this. So many years had elapsed now since news came out to the world that the unfortunate ship, *Clipper of the Seas,* went down off the coast of Spain

on her homeward voyage, and all her passengers with her, as to be a fact of the past. Never a doubt had been cast upon any part of the tidings, so far as he knew.

With an uneasy feeling at his heart, he went off to the city, to call upon the brokers, or agents, of the ship: remembering quite well who they were, and that they lived in Fenchurch Street. An elderly man, clerk in the house for many years, and now a partner, received him.

"The *Clipper of the Seas?*" repeated the old gentleman, after listening to what Mr. Hamlyn had to say. "No, sir, we don't know that any of her passengers were saved; always supposed they were not. But lately we have had some little cause to doubt whether one or two might not have been."

Philip Hamlyn's heart beat faster.

"Will you tell me why you think this?"

"It isn't that we think it; at best 'tis but a doubt," was the reply. "One of our own ships, getting in last month from Madras, had a sailor on board who chanced to remark to me, when he was up here getting his pay, that it was not the first time he had served in our employ: he had been in that ship that was lost, the *Clipper of the Seas*. And he went on to say, in answer to a remark of mine about all the passengers having been lost, that that was not quite correct, for that one of them had certainly been saved—a lady or a nurse, he didn't know which, and also a little child that she was in charge of. He was positive about it, he added, upon my expressing my doubts, for they got to shore in the same small boat that he did."

"Is it true, think you?" gasped Mr. Hamlyn.

"Sir, we are inclined to think it is not true," emphatically spoke the old gentleman. "Upon inquiring about this man's character, we found that he is given to drinking, so that what he says cannot always be relied upon. Again, it seems next to an impossibility that if any passenger were saved we should not have heard of it. Altogether we feel inclined to judge that the man, though evidently believing he spoke truth, was but labouring under an hallucination."

"Can you tell me where I can find the man?" asked Mr. Hamlyn, after a pause.

"Not anywhere at present, sir. He has sailed again."

So that ended it for the day. Philip Hamlyn went home and sat down to dinner with his wife, as already spoken of. And when she told him that the mysterious lady waiting outside must be waiting for him—probably some acquaintance of his of the years gone by—it set his brain working and his pulses throbbing, for he suddenly connected her with what he had that day heard. No wonder his head ached!

To-day, after seeing his wife off by train, he went to find Major Pratt. The Major was better, and could talk, swearing a great deal over the gout, and the letter.

"It was from Caroline," he said, alluding to his sister, Miss Pratt, who had been with him in India. "She lives in Essex, you know, Philip."

"Oh, yes, I know," answered Philip Hamlyn. "But what is it that Caroline says in her letter?"

"You shall hear," said the Major, producing his sister's letter and opening it. "Listen. Here it is. 'The strangest thing has happened, brother! Susan went to London yesterday to get my fronts recurled at the hairdresser's, and she was waiting in the shop, when a lady came out of the back room, having been in there to get a little boy's hair cut. Susan was quite struck dumb when she saw her: *She thinks it was poor erring Dolly;* never saw such a likeness before, she says; could almost swear to her by the lovely pale gold hair. The lady pulled her veil over her face when she saw Susan staring at her, and went away with great speed. Susan asked the hairdresser's people if they knew the lady's name, or who she was, but they told her she was a stranger to them; had never been in the shop before. Dear Richard, this is troubling me; I could not sleep all last night for thinking of it. Do you suppose it is possible that Dolly and the boy were not drowned? Your affectionate sister, Caroline.' Now, did you ever read such a letter?" stormed the Major. "If that Susan went home and said she'd seen St. Paul's blown up, Caroline would believe it. Who's Susan, d'ye say? Why, you've lost your memory, Philip. Susan was the English maid we had with us in Calcutta."

"It cannot possibly be true," cried Mr. Hamlyn with quivering lips.

"True, no! of course it can't be, hang it! Or else what would you do?"

That might be logical though not satisfactory reasoning. And Mr. Hamlyn thought of the woman said to be watching for him, and her pale gold hair.

"She was a cunning jade, if ever there was one, mark you, Philip Hamlyn; that false wife of yours and kin of mine; came of a cunning family on the mother's side. Put it that she *was* saved: if it suited her to let us suppose she was drowned, why, she'd do it. *I* know Dolly."

And poor Philip Hamlyn, assenting to the truth of this with all his heart, went out to face the battle that might be coming upon him, lacking the courage for it.

II.

THE cold, clear afternoon air touching their healthy faces, and Jack Frost nipping their noses, raced Miss West and Kate Dancox up and down the hawthorn walk. It had pleased that arbitrary young damsel, who was still very childish, to enter a protest against going beyond the grounds that fine winter's day; she would be in the hawthorn

walk, or nowhere; and she would run races there. As Miss West gave in to her whims for peace' sake in things not important, and as she was young enough herself not to dislike running, to the hawthorn walk they went.

Captain Monk was recovering rapidly. His sudden illness had been caused by drinking some cold cider when some out-door exercise had made him dangerously hot. The alarm and apprehension had now subsided; and Mrs. Hamlyn, arriving three days ago in answer to the hasty summons, was thinking of returning to London.

"You are cheating!" called out Kate, flying off at a tangent to cross her governess's path. "You've no right to get before me!"

"Gently," corrected Miss West. "My dear, we have run enough for to-day."

"We haven't, you ugly, cross old thing! Aunt Eliza says you *are* ugly. And ——"

The young lady's amenities were cut short by finding herself suddenly lifted off her feet by Mr. Harry Carradyne, who had come behind them.

"Let me alone, Harry! You are always coming where you are not wanted. Aunt Eliza says so."

A sudden light, as of mirth, illumined Harry Carradyne's fresh, frank countenance. "Aunt Eliza says all those things, does she? Well, Miss Kate, she also says something else—that you are now to go indoors."

"What for? I shan't go in."

"Oh, very well. Then that dandified silk frock for the new year that the dressmaker is waiting to try on can be put aside until midsummer."

Kate dearly loved new silk frocks, and she raced away. The governess followed more slowly, Mr. Carradyne talking by her side.

For some months now their love dream had been going on; aye, and the love-making too. Not altogether surreptitiously; neither of them would have liked that. Though not expedient to proclaim it yet to Captain Monk and the world, Mrs. Carradyne knew of it and tacitly sanctioned it.

Alice West turned her face, blushing uncomfortably, to him as they walked. "I am glad to have this opportunity of saying something to you," she spoke with hesitation. "Are you not upon rather bad terms with Mrs. Hamlyn?"

"She is with me," replied Harry.

"And—am *I* the cause?" continued Alice, feeling as if her fears were confirmed.

"Not at all. She has not fathomed the truth yet, with all her penetration, though she may have some suspicion of it. Eliza wants to bend me to her will in the matter of the house, and I won't be bent. Old Peveril wishes to resign the lease of Peacock Range to me; I wish to take it from him, and Eliza objects. She says Peveril

promised her the house until the seven years' lease was out, and that she means to keep him to his bargain."

"Do you quarrel?"

"Quarrel! no," laughed Harry Carradyne. "I joke with her, rather than quarrel. But I don't give in. She pays me some left-handed compliments, telling me that I am no gentleman, that I'm a bear, and so on; to which I make my bow."

Alice West was gazing straight before her, a troubled look in her eyes. "Then you see that I *am* the remote cause of the quarrel, Harry. But for thinking of me, you would not care to take the house on your own hands."

"I don't know that. Be very sure of one thing, Alice: that I shall not stay an hour longer under the roof here if my uncle disinherits me. That he, a man of indomitable will, should be so long making up his mind is a proof that he shrinks from committing the injustice. The suspense it keeps me in is the worst of all. I told him so the other evening when we were sitting together and he was in an amiable mood. I said that any decision he might come to would be more tolerable than this prolonged suspense."

Alice drew a long breath at his temerity.

Harry laughed. "Indeed, I quite expected to be ordered out of the room in a storm. Instead of that, he took it quietly, civilly telling me to have a little more patience; and then began to speak of the annual new year's dinner, which is not far off now."

"Mrs. Carradyne is thinking that he may not hold the dinner this year, as he has been so ill," remarked the young lady.

"He will never give that up, Alice, as long as he can hold anything; and he is almost well again, you know. Oh, yes; we shall have the dinner and the chimes also."

"I have never heard the chimes," she said. "They have not played since I came to Church Leet."

"They are to play this year," said Harry Carradyne. "But I don't think my mother knows it."

"Is it true that Mrs. Carradyne does not like to hear the chimes? I seem to have gathered the idea, somehow," added Alice. But she received no answer.

Kate Dancox was changeable as the ever-shifting sea. Delighted with the frock that was in process, she extended her approbation to its maker; and when Mrs. Ram, a homely workwoman, departed with her small bundle in her arms, it pleased the young lady to say she would attend her to her home. This involved the attendance of Miss West, who now found herself summoned to the charge.

Having escorted Mrs. Ram to her lowly door, and had innumerable intricate questions answered touching trimmings and fringes, Miss Kate Dancox, disregarding her governess altogether, flew back along the road with all the speed of her active limbs, and disappeared within the churchyard. At first Alice, who was growing tired and followed

slowly, could not see her; presently, a desperate shriek guided her to an unfrequented corner where the graves were crowded. Miss Kate had come to grief in jumping over a tombstone, and bruised both her knees.

"There!" exclaimed Alice, sitting down on the stump of an old tree, close to the low wall. "You've hurt yourself now."

"Oh, it's nothing," returned Kate, who did not make much of smarts. And she went limping away to Mr. Grame, then doing some light work in his garden.

Alice sat on where she was, reading the inscription on the tombstones; some of them so faint with time as to be hardly discernible. While standing up to make out one that seemed of a rather better class than the rest, she observed Nancy Cale, the clerk's wife, sitting in the church-porch and watching her attentively. The poor old woman had been ill for a long time, and Alice was surprised to see her out. Leaving the inscriptions, she went across the churchyard.

"Ay, my dear young lady, I be up again, and thankful enough to say it; and I thought as the day's so fine, I'd step out a bit," she said, in answer to the salutation. An intelligent woman, and quite sufficiently cultivated for her work—cleaning the church and washing the parson's surplices. "I thought John was in the church here, and came to speak to him; but he's not, I find; the door's locked."

"I saw John down by Mrs. Ram's just now; he was talking to Nott, the carpenter," observed Alice. "Nancy, I was trying to make out some of those old names; but it is difficult to do so," she added, pointing to the crowded corner.

"Ay, I see, my dear," nodded Nancy. "*His* be worn a'most right off. I think I'd have it done again, an' I was you."

"Have what done again?"

"The name upon your poor papa's gravestone."

"The *what?*" exclaimed Alice. And Nancy repeated her words.

Alice stared at her. Had Mrs. Cale's wits vanished in her illness? "Do you know what you are saying, Nancy?" she cried; "I don't. What had papa to do with this place? I think you must be wandering."

Nancy stared in her turn. "Sure, it's not possible," she said slowly, beginning to put two and two together, "that you don't know who you are, Miss West? That your papa died here? and lies buried here?"

Alice West turned white, and sat down on the opposite bench to Nancy. She did know that her father had died at some small country living he held; but she never suspected that it was at Church Leet. Her mother had gone to London after his death, and set up a school—which succeeded well. But soon she died, and the ladies who took to the school before her death took to Alice with it. The child was still too young to be told by her mother of the serious past—or Mrs

West deemed her to be so. And she had grown up in ignorance of her father's fate and of where he died.

"When we heard, me and John, that it was a Miss West who had come to the Hall to be governess to Parson Dancox's child, the name struck us both," went on Nancy. "Next we looked at your face, my dear, to trace any likeness there might be, and we thought we saw it—for you've got your papa's eyes for certain. Then, one day when I was dusting in here, I let fall a hymn-book from the Hall pew; in picking it up it came open, and the name writ in it stared me in the face, '*Alice* West.' After that, we had no manner of doubt, him and me, and I've often wished to talk with you and tell you so. My dear, I've had you on my knee many a time when you were a little one."

Alice burst into tears of agitation. "I never knew it! I never knew it. Dear Nancy, what did papa die of?"

"Ah, that was a sad piece of business—he was killed," said Nancy. And forthwith, rightly or wrongly, she, garrulous with old age, told all the history.

It was an exciting interview, lasting until the shades of evening surprised them. Miss Kate Dancox might have gone roving to the other end of the globe, for all the attention given her just then. Poor Alice cried and sighed, and trembled inwardly and outwardly. "To think that it should just be to this place that I should come as governess, and to the house of Captain Monk!" she wailed. "Surely he did not *kill* papa!—intentionally!"

"No, no; nobody has ever thought that," disclaimed Nancy. "The Captain is a passionate man, as is well known, and they quarrelled, and a hot blow, not intentional, must have been struck between 'em. And all through them blessed chimes, Miss Alice! Not but that they be sweet to listen to—and they be going to ring again this New Year's Eve."

Drawing her warm cloak about her, Nancy Cale set off towards her cottage. Alice West sat on in the sheltered porch, utterly bewildered. Never in her life had she felt so agitated, so incapable of sound and sober thought. *Now* it was explained why the bow-windowed sitting-room at the Vicarage would always strike her as being familiar to her memory; as though she had at some time known one that resembled it, or perhaps seen one like it in a dream.

"Well, I'm sure!"

The jesting salutation came from Harry Carradyne. Despatched in search of the truants, he had found Kate at the Vicarage, making much of the last new baby there, and devouring a sumptuous tea of cakes and jam. Miss West? Oh, Miss West was sitting in the church porch, talking to old Nancy Cale, she said to Harry.

"Why! What is it?" he exclaimed in dismay, finding that the burst of emotion which he had taken to be laughter, meant tears. "What has happened, Alice?"

She could no more have kept the tears in than she could help—presently—telling him the news. He sat down by her and held her close to him, and pressed for it. She was the daughter of George West, who had died in the dispute with Captain Monk in the dining-room at the Hall so many years before, and who was lying here in the corner of the churchyard; and she had never, never known it!

Mr. Carradyne was somewhat taken to; there was no denying it; chiefly by surprise.

"I thought your father was a soldier, Alice—Colonel West; and died when serving in India. I'm sure it was said so when you came."

"Oh, no, that could not have been said," she cried; "unless Mrs. Moffit, the agent, made the mistake. It was my uncle who died in India. No one here ever questioned me about my parents, knowing they were dead. Oh, dear," she went on in agitation, after a silent pause, "what am I to do now? I cannot stay at the Hall. Captain Monk would not allow it either."

"No need to tell him," quoth Mr. Harry.

"And—of course—we must part. You and I."

"Indeed! Who says so?"

"I am not sure that it would be right to—to—you know."

"To what? Go on, my dear."

Alice sighed; her eyes were fixed thoughtfully on the fast falling twilight. "Mrs. Carradyne will not care for me when she knows who I am," she said in low tones.

"My dear, shall I tell you how it strikes me?" returned Harry: "that my mother will be only the more anxious to have you connected with us by closer and dearer ties, so as to atone to you, in even a small degree, for the cruel wrong which fell upon your father. As to me—it shall be made my life's best and dearest privilege."

But when a climax such as this takes place, the right or the wrong thing to be done cannot be settled in a moment. Alice West did not see her way quite clearly, and for the present she neither said nor did anything.

This little matter occurred on the Friday in Christmas week; on the following day, Saturday, Mrs. Hamlyn was returning to London. Christmas Day this year had fallen on a Monday. Some old wives hold a superstition that when that happens, it inaugurates but small luck for the following year, either for communities or for individuals. Not that that fancy has anything to do with the present history. Captain Monk's banquet would not be held until the Monday night: as was customary when New Year's Eve fell on a Sunday. He had urged his daughter to remain over New Year's Day; but she declined, on the plea that as she had been away from her husband on Christmas Day, she would like to pass New Year's Day with him. The truth being that she wanted to get to London to see after that yellow-haired lady who was supposed to be peeping after Philip Hamlyn.

On the Saturday morning, Mrs. Hamlyn was driven to Evesham in the close carriage, and took the train to London. Her husband, ever kind and attentive, met her at the Paddington terminus. He was looking haggard, and seemed to be thinner than when she left him nine days ago.

"Are you well, Philip?" she asked anxiously.

"Oh, quite well," quickly answered poor Philip Hamlyn, smiling a warm smile, that he meant to look like a gay one. "Nothing ever ails me."

No, nothing might ail him bodily; but mentally—ah, how much! That awful terror lay upon him thick and threefold; it had not yet come to any solution, one way or the other. Major Pratt had taken up the very worst view of it; and spent his days pitching hard names at misbehaving syrens, gifted with "the deuce's own cunning" and with mermaids' shining hair.

"And how have things been going, Penelope?" asked Mrs. Hamlyn of the nurse, as she sat in the nursery with her boy upon her knee. "All right?"

"Quite so, ma'am. Master Walter has been just as good as gold."

"Mamma's darling!" murmured the doting mother, burying her face in his. "I have been thinking, Penelope, that your master does not look well," she added after a minute.

"No, ma'am? I've not noticed it. We have not seen much of him up here; he has been at his club a good deal—and dined three or four times with old Major Pratt."

"As if she would notice it!—servants never notice anything!" thought Eliza Hamlyn in her imperious way of judging the world. "By the way, Penelope," she said aloud in light and careless tones, "has that woman with the yellow hair been seen about much?—has she presumed again to accost my little son?"

"The woman with the yellow hair?" repeated Penelope, looking at her mistress, for the girl had quite forgotten the episode. "Oh, I remember—she that stood outside there and came to us in the square-garden. No, ma'am, I've seen nothing at all of her since that day."

"For there are wicked people who prowl about to kidnap children," continued Mrs. Hamlyn, as if she would condescend to explain her inquiry, "and that woman looked like one. Never suffer her to approach my darling again. Mind that, Penelope."

The jealous heart is not easily reassured. And Mrs. Hamlyn, restless and suspicious, put the same question to her husband. It was whilst they were waiting in the drawing-room for dinner to be announced, and she had come down from changing her apparel after her journey. How handsome she looked! a right regal woman! as she stood there arrayed in dark blue velvet, the fire-light playing upon her proud face, and upon the diamond earrings and brooch she wore.

"Philip, has that woman been prowling about here again?"

Just for an imperceptible second, for thought is quick, it occurred to Philip Hamlyn to temporise, to affect ignorance, and say, What woman? just as if his mind were not full of the woman, and of nothing else. But he abandoned it as useless.

"I have not seen her since; not at all," he answered: and though his words were purposely indifferent, his wife, knowing all his tones and ways by heart, was not deceived. "He is afraid of that woman," she whispered to herself; "or else afraid of *me*." But she said no more.

"Have you come to any definite understanding with Mr. Carradyne in regard to Peacock's Range, Eliza?"

"He will not come to any; he is civilly obstinate over it. Laughs in my face with the most perfect impudence, and tells me: 'A man must be allowed to put in his own claim to his own house, when he wants to do so.'"

"Well, Eliza, that seems to be only right and fair. Percival made no positive agreement with us, remember."

"*Is* it right and fair! That may be your opinion, Philip, but it is not mine. We shall see, Mr. Harry Carradyne!"

"Dinner is served, ma'am," announced the old butler.

That evening passed. Sunday passed, the last day of the dying year; and Monday morning, New Year's day, dawned.

New Year's Day. Mr. and Mrs. Hamlyn were seated at the breakfast-table. It was a bright, cold, sunny morning, showing plenty of blue sky. Young Master Walter, in consideration of the day, was breakfasting at their table, seated in his high chair.

"Me to have dinner wid mamma to-day! Me have pudding!"

"That you shall, my sweetest; and everything that's good," assented his mother.

In came Japhet at this juncture. "There's a little boy in the hall, sir, asking to see you," said he to his master. "He——"

"Oh, we shall have plenty of boys here to-day, asking for a new year's gift," interposed Mrs. Hamlyn, rather impatiently. "Send him a shilling, Philip."

"It's not a poor boy, ma'am," answered Japhet, "but a little gentleman: six or seven years old, he looks. He says he particularly wants to see master."

Philip Hamlyn smiled. "Particularly wants a shilling, I expect. Send him in, Japhet."

The lad came in. A well-dressed beautiful boy, refined in looks and demeanour, bearing in his face a strange likeness to Mr. Hamlyn. He looked about timidly.

Eliza, struck with the resemblance, gazed at him. Her husband spoke. "What do you want with me, my lad?"

"If you please, sir, are you Mr. Hamlyn?" asked the child, going forward with hesitating steps. "Are you my papa?"

Every drop of blood seemed to leave Philip Hamlyn's face and fly to his heart. He could not speak, and looked white as a ghost.

"Who are you? What is your name?" imperiously demanded Philip's wife.

"It is Walter Hamlyn," replied the lad, in clear, pretty tones.

And now it was Mrs. Hamlyn's turn to look white. Walter Hamlyn?—the name of her own dear son! when she had expected him to say Sam Smith, or John Jones! What insolence some people had!

"Where do you come from, boy? Who sent you here?" she reiterated.

"I come from mamma. She would have sent me before, but I caught cold, and was in bed all last week."

Mr. Hamlyn rose. It was a momentous predicament, but he must do the best he could in it. He was a man of nice honour, and he wished with all his heart that the earth would open and engulf him. "Eliza, my love, allow me to deal with this matter," he said, his voice taking a low, tender, considerate tone. "I will question the boy in another room. Some mistake, I reckon."

"No, Philip, you must put your questions before me," she said, resolute in her anger. "What is it you are fearing? Better tell me all, however disreputable it may be."

"I dare not tell you," he gasped; "it is not—I fear—the disreputable thing you may be fancying."

"Not dare! By what right do you call this gentleman 'papa'?" she passionately demanded of the child.

"Mamma told me to. She would never let me come home to him before because of not wishing to part from me."

Mrs. Hamlyn gazed at him. "Where were you born?"

"At Calcutta; that's in India. Mamma brought me home in the *Clipper of the Seas*, and the ship went down, but quite everybody was not lost in it, though papa thought so."

The boy had evidently been well instructed. Eliza Hamlyn, grasping the whole truth now, staggered back in terror.

"Philip! Philip! is it true? Was it *this* you feared?"

He made a motion of assent and covered his face. "Heaven knows I would rather have died."

He stood back against the window-curtains, that they might shade his pain. She fell into a chair and wished he *had* died, years before.

But what was to be the end of it all? Though Eliza Hamlyn went straight out and despatched that syren of the golden hair with a poison-tipped bodkin (and possibly her will might be good to do it), it could not make things any the better for herself.

III.

NEW YEAR'S NIGHT at Leet Hall, and the banquet in full swing—but not, as usual, New Year's Eve.

Captain Monk headed his table, the parson, Robert Grame, at his right hand, Harry Carradyne on his left. Whether it might be that the world, even that out-of-the-way part of it, Church Leet, was improving in manners and morals; or whether the Captain himself was changing: certain it was that the board was not the free board it used to be. Mrs. Carradyne herself might have sat at it now, and never once blushed by as much as the pink of a sea-shell.

It was known that the chimes were to play this year; and, when midnight was close at hand, Captain Monk volunteered a statement which astonished his hearers. Rimmer, the butler, had come into the room to open the windows.

"I am getting tired of the chimes, and all people have not liked them," spoke the Captain in slow, distinct tones. "I have made up my mind to do away with them, and you will hear them to-night, gentlemen, for the last time."

"*Really*, Uncle Godfrey!" cried Harry Carradyne, in most intense surprise.

"I hope they'll bring us no ill-luck to-night!" continued Captain Monk as a grim joke, disregarding Harry's remark. "Perhaps they will, though, out of sheer spite, knowing they'll never have another chance of it. Well, well, they're welcome. Fill your glasses, gentlemen."

Rimmer was throwing up the windows. In another minute the church clock boomed out the first stroke of twelve, and the room fell into a dead silence. With the last stroke the Captain rose, glass in hand.

"A happy New Year to you, gentlemen! A happy New Year to us all. May it bring to us health and prosperity!"

"And God's blessing," reverently added Robert Grame aloud, as if to remedy an omission.

Ring, ring, ring! Ah, there it came, the soft harmony of the chimes, stealing up through the midnight air. Not quite as loudly heard, perhaps, as usual, for there was no wind to waft it, but in tones wondrously clear and sweet. Never had the strains of the "Bay of Biscay" brought to the ear more charming melody. How soothing it was to those enrapt listeners; seeming to tell of peace.

But soon another sound arose to mingle with it. A harsh, grating sound, like the noise of wheels passing over gravel. Heads were lifted; glances expressed surprise. With the last strains of the chimes dying away in the distance, a carriage of some kind galloped up to the hall door.

Eliza Hamlyn alighted from it—with her child and its nurse. As quickly as she could make opportunity after that scene enacted in

her breakfast-room in London in the morning, that is, as soon as her husband's back was turned, she had quitted the house with the maid and child, to take the train for home, bringing with her—it was what she phrased it—her shameful tale.

A tale that distressed Mrs. Carradyne to sickness. A tale that so abjectly terrified Captain Monk, when it was imparted to him on Tuesday morning, as to take every atom of fierceness out of his composition.

"Not Hamlyn's wife!" he gasped. "Eliza!"

"No, not his wife," she retorted, a great deal too angry herself to be anything but fierce and fiery. "That other woman, that false first wife of his, was not drowned, as was set forth, and she has come to claim him, with their son."

"His wife; their son," muttered the Captain as if he were bewildered. "Then what are you?—what is your son? Oh, my poor Eliza."

"Yes, what are we? Papa, I will bring him to answer for it before his country's tribunal—if there be law in the land."

No one spoke to this. It may have occurred to them to remember that Mr. Hamlyn could not legally be punished for what he did in innocence. Captain Monk opened the glass doors and walked on to the terrace, as if the air of the room were oppressive. Eliza went out after him.

"Papa," she said, "there now exists all the more reason for your making my darling *your* heir. Let it be settled without delay. He must succeed to Leet Hall."

Captain Monk looked at his daughter as if not understanding her. "No, no, no," he said. "My child, you forget; trouble must be obscuring your faculties. None but a *legal* descendant of the Monks could be allowed to have Leet Hall. Besides, apart from this, it is already settled. I have seen for some little time now how unjust it would be to supplant Henry Carradyne."

"Is *he* to be your heir? Is it so ordered?"

"Irrevocably. I have told him so this morning."

"What am I to do?" she wailed in bitter despair. "Papa, what is to become of me—and of my unoffending child?"

"I don't know: I wish I did know. It will be a cruel blight upon us all. You will have to live it down, Eliza. Ah, child, if you and Katherine had only listened to me, and not made those rebellious marriages!"

He turned away as he spoke in the direction of the church, to see that his orders were being executed there. Harry Carradyne ran after him. The clock was striking midday as they entered the churchyard.

Yes, the workmen were at their work—taking down the bells.

"If the time were to come over again, Harry," began Captain Monk as they were walking homeward, he leaning upon his nephew's

arm, "I wouldn't have them put up. They don't seem to have brought luck somehow, as the parish has been free to say. Not but that must be utter nonsense."

"Well, no they don't, uncle," assented Harry.

"As one grows in years, one gets to look at things differently, lad. Actions that seemed laudable enough when one's blood was young and hot, crop up again then, wearing another aspect. But for those chimes, poor West would not have have died as he did. I have had him upon my mind a good bit lately."

Surely Captain Monk was wonderfully changing! And he was leaning heavily upon Harry's arm.

"Are you tired, uncle? Would you like to sit down on this bench and rest?"

"No, I'm not tired. It's West I'm thinking about. He lies on my mind sadly. And I never did anything for the wife or child to atone to them! It's too late now—and has been this many a year."

Harry Carradyne's heart began to beat a little. Should he say what he had been hoping to say sometime? He might never have a better opportunity than this.

"Uncle Godfrey," he spoke in low tones, "would you—would you like to see Mr. West's daughter? His wife has been dead a long while; but—would you like to see her—Alice?"

"Ay," fervently spoke the old man. "If she be in the land of the living, bring her to me. I'll tell her how sorry I am, and how I would undo the past if I could. And I'll ask her if she'll be to me as a daughter."

So then Harry Carradyne told him all. It was Alice West who was already under his roof, and who, fate and fortune permitting, *Heaven* permitting, would sometime be Alice Carradyne.

Down sat Captain Monk on a bench of his own accord. Tears rose to his eyes. The sudden revulsion of feeling was great: and truly he was a changed man.

"You spoke of Heaven, Harry. I shall begin to think it has forgiven me. Let us be thankful."

But Captain Monk found he had more to thank Heaven for ere many minutes had elapsed. As Harry Carradyne sat by him in silence, marvelling at the change, yet knowing that the grievous blow which was making havoc of Eliza had effected the completeness of the subduing, he caught sight of an approaching fly. Another fly from the railway station at Evesham.

"How dare you come here, you villain!" shouted Captain Monk, rising in threatening anger, as the fly's inmate called to the driver to stop and began to get out of it. "Are you not ashamed to show your face to me, after the evil you have inflicted upon my daughter?"

Philip Hamlyn, smiling kindly and calmly, caught Captain Monk's lifted hands. "No evil, sir," he said, soothingly. "It was all a mistake. Eliza is my true and lawful wife."

"Eh? What's that?" said the Captain quite in a whisper, his lips trembling.

Quietly Philip Hamlyn explained. He had taken the previous day to investigate the matter, and had followed his wife down by a night train. His first wife *was* dead. She had been drowned in the *Clipper of the Seas*, as was supposed. The child was saved, with his nurse: the only two passengers who were saved. The nurse made her way to a place in the south of France, where, as she knew, her late mistress's sister lived, Mrs. O'Connett, formerly Miss Sophia Pratt. Mrs. O'Connett, a young widow, had just lost her only child, a boy about the age of the little one rescued from the cruel seas. She seized on him with feverish avidity, adopted him as her own, quitted the place for another Anglo-French town where she was not previously known, taught the child to call her "Mamma," and had never let it transpire that the boy was not hers. But now, after the lapse of a few years, Mrs. O'Connett was on the eve of marriage with an Irish Major. To him she told the truth; and, as he did not want to marry the child as well as herself, he persuaded her to return him to his father. Mrs. O'Connett brought the child to London, ascertained Mr. Hamlyn's address, and all about him, and watched about to speak to him, alone if possible, unknown to his wife. Remembering what had been the behaviour of the child's mother, she was by no means sure of a good reception from Philip himself, or what adverse influence might be brought to bear by the new ties he had formed. Mrs. O'Connett had the same remarkable and lovely hair that her sister had had, whom she very much resembled; she had also a talent for underhand ways.

That was the truth—and I have had to tell it in a nutshell, space growing limited. Philip Hamlyn had ascertained it all beyond possibility of dispute, had seen Mrs. O'Connett, and had brought down the good tidings.

Of all the curious sights this record has afforded, perhaps the most surprising was to see Captain Monk pass his arm lovingly within that of Philip Hamlyn and march off with him to Leet Hall as if he were a prize to be coveted. "Here he is, Eliza," said he; "he has come to cheer both you and me."

For once in her life Eliza Hamlyn was subdued to meekness. She kissed her husband and shed happy tears. She was his lawful wife, and the little one was his lawful child. True, there was an elder son; but, compared with what had been feared, that was a slight evil.

"We must make them true brothers, Eliza," whispered Philip Hamlyn. "They shall share alike all I have and all I leave behind me. And our own little one must be called James in future."

"And you and I will be good friends from henceforth," cried Captain Monk warmly, clasping Philip Hamlyn's ready hand. "I have been to blame in more ways than one, giving the reins unduly

to my arbitrary temper. It seems to me, however, that life holds enough of real angles for us without creating any for ourselves."

And surely it did seem, as Mrs. Carradyne would have liked to point out aloud, that those chimes had been fraught with messages of evil. For had not all these blessings set in with their removal?—even in the very hour that saw the bells taken down!

Harry Carradyne had drawn his uncle from the room; he now came in again, bringing Alice West. Her face was a picture of agitation, for she had been made known to Captain Monk. Harry led her up to Mrs. Hamlyn, with a beaming smile and a whisper.

"Eliza, as we seem to be going in generally for amenities, won't you give just a little corner of your heart to *her?* We owe her some reparation for the past. It is her father who lies in that grave at the north end of the churchyard."

Eliza started. "Her father! Poor George West her father?"

"Even so."

Just a moment's struggle with her rebellious spirit and Mrs. Hamlyn stooped to kiss the trembling girl. "Yes, Alice, we do owe you reparation amongst us, and we must try to make it," she said heartily. "I see how it is: you will reign here with Harry; and I think he will be able, after all, to let us keep Peacock's Range."

There came a grand wedding, Captain Monk himself giving Alice away. But Mr. and Mrs. Hamlyn did not retain Peacock's Range; they and their boys, the two Walters, had to look out for another local residence; for Mrs. Carradyne retired to Peacock's Range herself. Now that Leet Hall had a young mistress, she deemed it policy to quit it; though it should have as much of her as it pleased as a visitor. And Captain Godfrey Monk made himself happier in these peaceful days than he had ever been in his stormy ones.

And that's the history. If I had to begin it again, I don't think I should write it; for I have had to take its details from other people—chiefly from the Squire and old Mr. Sterling, of the Court. There's nothing of mine in it, so to say, and it has been only a bother.

And those unfortunate chimes have nearly passed out of memory with the lapse of years. The "Silent Chimes" they are always called when, by chance, allusion is made to them, and will be so called for ever.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THE BRETONS AT HOME.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.

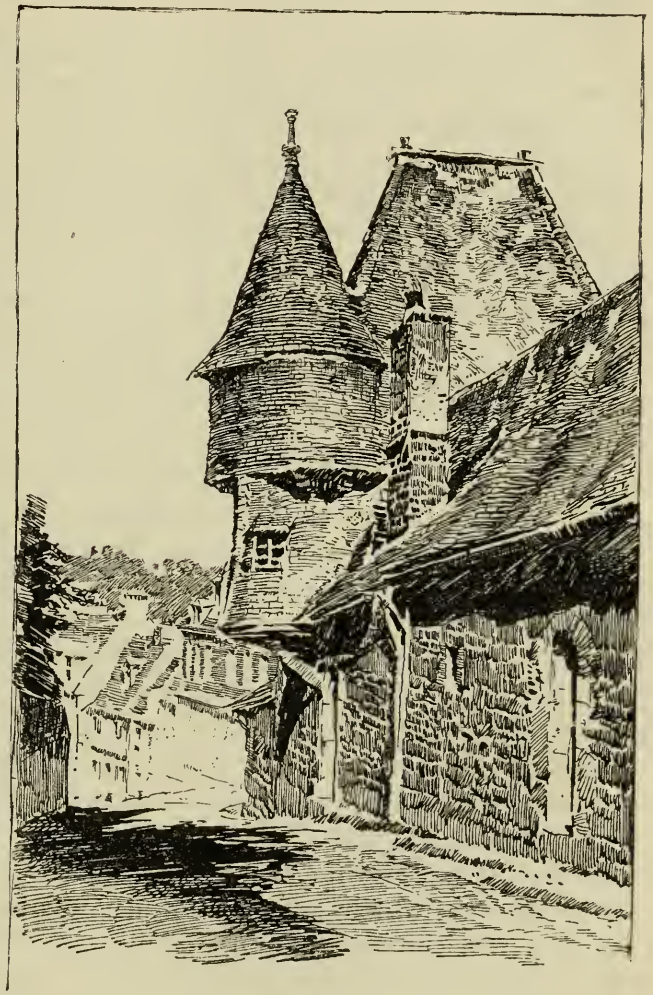
STILL we had not visited le Folgoët, and it had to be done.

"No one ever leaves our neighbourhood without having seen le Folgoët," said M. Hellard. "Or if he does so he loses the best thing we can offer him in the way of excursions. Also, he must expect no luck in his future travels through Brittany."

"And he must be looked upon in the light of a *barbare*," chimed in Madame. "Not to do le Folgoët would be almost as bad as not going to confession in Lent."

"My dear, did *you* go to confession in Lent?" asked Monsieur, slily.

"Monsieur Hellard," laughed Madame, blushing furiously, "I am a good Catholic. Ask no questions. We were speaking of Folgoët. Everyone should go there."



Morlaix.

"Is the excursion, then, to be looked upon as a pilgrimage, or a penance?" we asked. "Will it absolve us from our sins, or grant us indulgences? Is there some charm in its stones, or can we drink of its waters and return to our first youth?"

"The magic spring!" laughed Mme. Hellard. "You will find it at the back of the church. I have drunk of its waters, certainly; on a very hot day last summer. They refreshed me, but I still feel myself mortal."

"Ah, yes," cried Monsieur, "the waters of Lethe and the elixir vitæ have equally to be discovered. I imagine that they belong to Paradise—and we have lost Paradise, you know: though I have found my Eve," added Monsieur, with a gallant bow to his cara sposa; "and have been in Paradise ever since."

"*You*, apparently, have found and drunk of the waters of Lethe," laughed Madame. "You forget all our numerous quarrels and disagreements."

"Thunderstorms are said to clear the air," returned Monsieur; "but ours have been mere summer lightning. That, you know, is not dangerous, and beautifies the horizon."

It was the day of our visit to St. Jean du Doigt, and we had seriously fallen out with our coachman by the way. St. Jean had so charmed us that we felt reluctant to leave it. The little inn, quiet and solitary, with its windows open to the sunshine, its snow-white cloth, its wealth of creeper and blossom trailing up the walls and sunning over the roof, invited us to enter and be happy; to revel in the outer scene, sylvan, rustic, ecclesiastical, an overflow of the beauties of earth, sky, sunshine and ancient architecture. Here was an earthly paradise; it might still be ours for some golden moments. Yet we threw away our opportunity; as we so often do in life in far weightier matters than taking luncheon at a village inn.

We hesitated very much, but we had to see Plougasnou, and our driver, for reasons of his own, declared that Plougasnou was far more beautiful than St. Jean du Doigt, whilst its inn was renowned in Brittany. So, having watched the funeral wind picturesquely down the hill-side, pause at the beautiful gateway, and disappear into the church, we departed.

It was very charming to drive about the hills and valleys, the narrow country lanes that were full of the beauty of summer. Finally, a steep ascent brought us to our destination with a rude awakening. We had left Paradise for very earthly quarters. There was no beauty about the spot, which, placed on a hill, was bleak, bare, and exposed. The inn was the incarnation of ugliness, and everything about it was rough and rude. In the kitchen two women were at work. The one was brewing coffee, which sent forth a delicious aroma, the other, with weeping eyes, was peeling onions for the pot-au-feu.

We were served with a modest luncheon in a room behind the kitchen. Madame prepared our food, and we had the privilege of assisting at the ceremony. We were initiated into the mystery of frying an omelette-au-naturel, the safest thing to order, no matter where you may be in France, for the humblest cottage knows how to send up its omelette to perfection. The handmaiden waited upon us, but she was heavy and not intelligent, and she walked about in wooden shoes that clattered and echoed and shocked one's nerves. But this did not affect the omelette, or the modest ragout that concluded the banquet.

We lunched almost al fresco. The window was wide open and looked on to a large yard, surrounded by outbuildings. Hens raced about, and without ceremony flew up to the window and demanded their share of the feast. Several cats came in; so that, as far as animals were concerned, we might still consider ourselves in Paradise.

Then we passed out by way of the window, and immense dogs bade us defiance and woke the echoes of the neighbourhood. Luckily they were chained, and H. C.'s "Cave canem!" was superfluous. The church struck out the hour. Placed in a sort of three-cornered square above the inn, the tower stood out boldly against the background of sky, but it possessed no beauty or merit. Away out of sight and hearing, we imagined the glorious sea breaking and frothing over the rocks, and the points of land that stretched out ruggedly towards the horizon; but we did not go down to it. We felt out of tune with our surroundings, and only cared for the moment when we should commence the long drive homeward. Had we possessed some special anathema, some charm that would have placed our driver under a mild punishment for twenty-four hours, I believe that we should not have spared him.

So, on the whole, we were glad that our excursion to le Folgoët would have to be done in part by train. We arranged it for the morrow, making the most of our blue skies.

"You will have a charming day," said Madame Hellard, as we prepared to set out the next morning. "I do not even recommend umbrellas. It is the sort of wind that in Brittany never brings rain."

Our only objection was that there was rather too much of it.

Declining the omnibus, which rattled over the stones and was more or less of a sarcophagus, without its repose, we mounted the interminable Jacob's Ladder, and glanced in at our Antiquarian's. He was absent this morning; had gone a little way into the country, where he had heard of some Louis XIV. furniture that was to be sold by the Prior of an old Abbey: though how so much that was luxurious and worldly had ever entered an abbey seemed a mystery.

We were soon en route for Landerneau, our destination as far as the train was concerned. The line, picturesque and diversified, passed through a narrow wooded valley where ran the river Elorn. On the left was the extensive forest of Brézal; and in the small wood of *Pont-Christ*, an interesting sixteenth century chapel faced an ancient and romantic windmill. Close to this was a large pond, surrounded by rugged rocks and firs; altogether a wild and beautiful scene. Soon after, through the trees, we discerned the graceful open spire of the Church of La Roche, and then, upon rugged height above the railway, the ruins of the ancient Castle of la Roche-Maurice, called by the Breton peasants round about, in their broad dialect, "la Ro'ch Morvan." It was founded by Maurice, King of the Bretons, about the year 800, and was demolished about 1490, during the war Charles VIII. waged against Anne of Brittany. Very

little of the ruin remains, excepting a square donjon and a portion of the exterior walls and the four towers.

Finally came Landerneau, and the train continued its way towards Brest without us.

We found the old town well worth exploring. It is situated on the Elorn, or the river of Landerneau, as it is more often called. The stream is fairly broad here, and divides the town into two parts. It is spanned by an old bridge, bordered by a double row of ancient and gabled houses; and rising out of the stream, like a small island or a moated grange, is an old Gothic water mill, remarkably beautiful and picturesque. This little scene alone is worth a journey to Landerneau. A Gothic inscription, which has been placed in a house not far off, declares that the old mill was built by the Rohans in 1510; and was no doubt devoted to higher uses than the grinding of corn.

There are many old houses, many quaint and curious bits of architecture in Landerneau. On one of these, bearing the date of 1694, we found two curious sculptures: a lion rampant and a man armed with a drawn sword; and, between them, the inscription: TIRE, TVE. We might, indeed, have gone up and down the street armed with sword, gun, or any other murderous weapon, with impunity—there was nothing to fight but the air. We had it all to ourselves, on this side the river. Yet Landerneau is a flourishing place of some ten thousand inhabitants, with extensive manufactories, saw mills, and large timber yards. Vessels come up the river and load and unload; and, on bright days when the sunshine pours upon the flashing water, and warms the wood lying about in huge stacks, and a delicious pine-scent goes forth upon the air, it is a very pleasant scene, and a very fitting spot for a short sojourn.

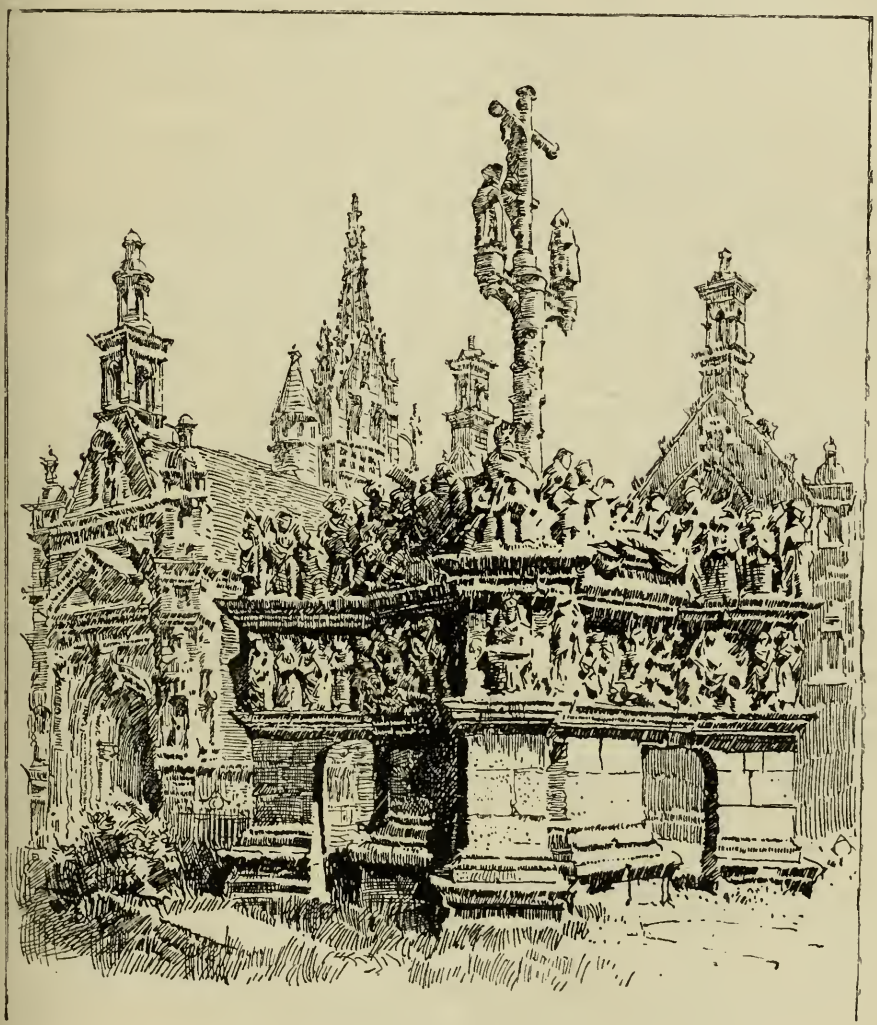
It also deals extensively in strawberries, exporting to England many thousand boxes of the delicious fruit that grows so largely in the neighbourhood. The hotel this morning seemed full of them, and we had but to ask, and to receive in abundance. The place was full of their fragrance: a fragrance that seemed so allied to the smell of the pine wood in the timber yards.

The town is of great antiquity, and appears to have succeeded a Roman Settlement. It is said to owe its name to St. Ernec, a Breton prince, the son, says tradition, of Judicaël, King of the Domnomée. This prince, about the year 669, turned monk, and built himself a cell on the banks of the Elorn, a river which divided in those days the sees of Léon and Cornouaille. Where the cell was is now the village of St. Ernec, and a chapel which preceded the church of the Récollets.

In time Landerneau became the chief town of the Vicomté of Léon; and was raised to a Principality in 1572 in favour of Henri, Vicomte de Rohan and his brother Réné, Lord of Soubise, who founded the dukedom of Rohan-Chabot. It remained in possession

of Lords of Landerneau until the Revolution. Fontenelle pillaged the town in 1592, and in the seventeenth century its famous castle was destroyed.

"There will be noise in Landerneau," has become a Breton proverb, employed whenever any social event is stirring up the populace. It owes its origin to a bygone custom of the town, of serenading



CALVARY, GUIMILIAU.

widows on the evening of their second marriage, with drums, trumpets, kettles, and every kind of unmusical instrument that could be pressed into the service of the uproarious ceremony.

Of this we had no evidence. The town was quiet to the verge of deadly dulness; if there were widows rash enough to contemplate a second marriage, we knew nothing about it; they were discreet, and kept their secret to themselves.

There are many monasteries and nunneries in the neighbourhood. Some are in ruins; some have become destined to other purposes;

and if their walls could speak, probably would cry aloud: "To such base uses do we come!" Sitting on the banks of the river, you watch its calm flowing waters, and a vessel moored to the side, where a Breton woman is hanging out clothes to dry, and a man on deck is lazily smoking his pipe. Behind you is a timber yard, sending forth its strawberry-pine perfume. There is always some attractions in a timber yard. Whether you will or not it fascinates you; you enter for a moment, and stroll about through the little alleys between the stacks, as numerous and complicated as the twistings and turnings of a maze. You imagine yourself once more a boy playing at hide-and-seek, and revel in the hot sunshine that is pouring down upon you and bringing out the perfume of the wood.

Returning to the river, your eye wanders far down the stream, until a large building upon its banks arrests your attention. It looks the emblem and abode of peace; perhaps is so. It is the ancient Couvent des Cordeliers, founded by Jean de Rohan, in 1488. But monks no longer tread its corridors and offer up the midnight mass in its small chapel. It is now occupied by ladies—les Dames du Calvaire, as they are called. If the monks were to arise from their little graveyard, would they rush back horrified and affrighted at such desecration? and if the walls had voices, would *they*, too, be ungallant enough to cry "To such base uses do we come?" The ancient convent of the Ursulines has been turned into a Penitentiary, thus in a measure fulfilling its original destiny.

Not far from Landerneau, also, on the banks of the Elorn, is the Avenue of the Château de la Joyeuse Garde, celebrated as being the rendezvous of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Nothing now remains but the ruins of a subterranean vault and a romantic Gothic Gateway of the twelfth century, covered with ivy and creeping shrubs. The whole surroundings are beautiful and romantic; undulations, here wooded and rocky, there richly cultivated; laughing and fertile slopes running down into warm and sheltered valleys, through which the river winds its graceful course.

Having made a slight acquaintance with the old streets and ancient houses, we went back to the inn, where we found the carriage ready to take us to le Folgoët.

A strong wind had suddenly arisen and clouds of dust accompanied us. Under ordinary circumstances the drive would have been pleasant, though uneventful. The road is somewhat monotonous, and very little attracts the attention beyond small, well-wooded estates, breaking in upon the long stretches of richly cultivated country, where life ought to run in a very even tenor.

After awhile we turned into a by-road, and presently descending between high hedges, the object of our excursion suddenly and unexpectedly opened up before our astonished vision.

It would be difficult to forget the effect of that first view of le

Folgoët. The high hedges on either side had concealed everything. These fell away, and within a few yards of us, in a barren and dreary plain uprose the wonderful church.

A few poor houses and cottages comprise the village, and here nearly a thousand inhabitants manage to stow themselves away. But nothing strikes you more in these Breton villages than their silent and apparently deserted condition, even at midday. Nine times out of ten, there is scarcely a creature to be seen in the streets, the house doors are for the most part closed, no face peers curiously from the windows, and no sound breaks upon the stillness of the air.

So was it to-day. The tramp of our horses, the rumbling of wheels alone startled the silence as we approached the church. The small houses forming the village in no way took from its grandeur or interfered with its solitude and solemnity.

There in the desolate plain it rose, "a thing of beauty and a joy for ever." Its charm fell upon us in the first moment, its wonderful tone and colouring held us spellbound. Our first wonder was to find a building so perfect in the midst of this desolate plain, so far away from the world and civilization. It was our first wonder; and when presently we turned away from it I think it was our last. But this solitude and desolation add infinitely to its charm; just as the mystery and romance that enshroud the far-off monasteries in their desolate mountain retreats would fall away as "the baseless fabric of a vision" if they were brought into the crowded and commonplace atmosphere of town life.

The legend of le Folgoët is a curious one:

Towards the middle of the fourteenth century, there lived in a neighbouring forest a poor idiot named Soloman, or Salaun, as it is written in the Breton tongue. This idiot was known as the Fool of the wood—le Folgoët.

There, in the quiet solitude, his voice might constantly be heard singing, in his own strange way, hymns to the Virgin; and often during the night, chanting an Ave Maria. Daily he begged his bread in the neighbouring town of Lesneven, always using the same form of words: Ave Maria: adding in Breton, "Salaun a zébré bara." "Soloman would eat some bread."

Thus for forty years he lived, never having injured anyone, or made an enemy. Then he fell ill, and one morning was found dead in the wood, near the little spring from which he had drunk daily and the hollow tree that had been his nightly shelter.

Soloman the fool was already fading from men's minds, when a miracle happened. Above the little grave in the wood where he had been buried there suddenly sprang a white lily, remarkable for its beauty and the exquisite perfume it shed abroad. But what made it more wonderful was that upon every leaf, in gold letters, appeared the words "Ave Maria!"

This apparent miracle was soon noised abroad, and people flocked from far and near to see the flower, which remained perfect for six weeks and then began to fade. All the priests and ecclesiastics of the neighbourhood, the nobles and the officers of the Duc de Rohan, decided that they should dig about the root of the lily and discover its source. This was done, and it was found to spring from the mouth of Salaun the idiot.

Of course such a miracle could not remain uncommemorated. Jean de Langouëznon, Abbot of Landévennec, one of the witnesses of the miracle, wrote an elaborate account of it in Latin. Pilgrimages were constantly made to the grave, and at last a church was built over the spring of the poor idiot, whose faith and blameless life had been so strangely rewarded. Such is the origin of one of Brittany's finest and most remarkable churches.

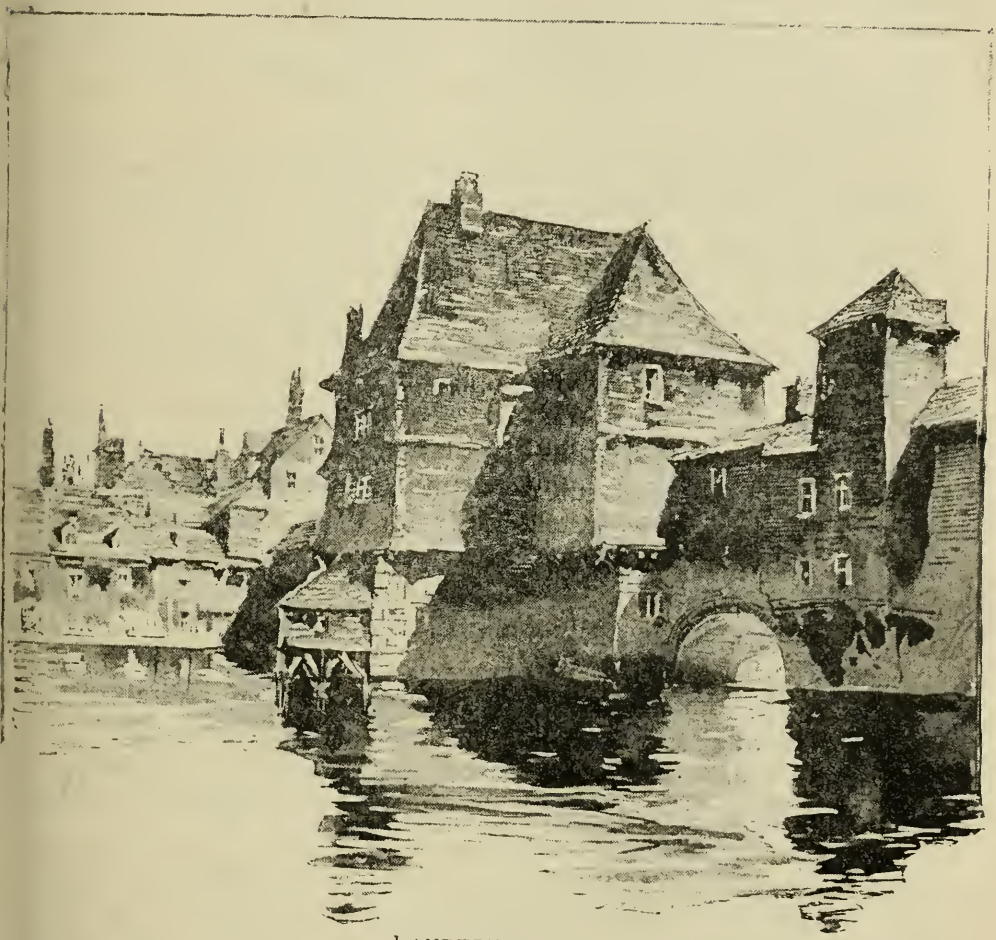
It is in the second Pointed Gothic style, and is built of a mixture of granite and dark Kersanton stone. The tone is singularly beautiful, and harmonises well with the dreary plain. It is at once sombre, dignified and impressive, relieved by great richness of sculpture. Kersanton stone lends itself to carving, as we have seen, and here many parts will be found in perfect preservation. Some of the rich mouldings in the doorways have worn away, and some of the small statues have been mutilated by time or have altogether disappeared, but the tone chiefly marks the age of the church. This is not always the case, and even not generally, with the buildings for which Kersanton stone has been used; but le Folgoët is exposed to the elements which sweep across the dreary plain without resistance; these have done their kindly work, and given to the old walls a beauty that no mortal hand could fashion.

We stood before it in mute admiration, having expected much, but finding far more. The tall trees near it bent and murmured to the fierce blast that blew, as if they, too, would add their homage to the charm of the sacred edifice.

Its solitary spire rose to a height of one hundred and sixty feet, full of grace and elegance. Every portion of the exterior bore minute inspection, it was so elaborately sculptured, so well preserved. Time has spared it more than the hand of man.

The towers are unequal. The higher possesses the exquisite open spire, a landmark for all the country round. The other is crowned by a small Renaissance lantern and roof, the work of the Duchess Anne The beautiful west portal is no longer perfect. Its porch or canopy fell in 1824, and has never been replaced; and better so. The porch of the south doorway is large, and so magnificent that it alone would be worth a pilgrimage. It is called the Apostles' porch, and is also supposed to have been the work of the good Duchess. Not far from it are the remains of what must have been a very lovely cross. The carving of the porch is of great delicacy and refinement; and, less exposed to the elements than the west doorway, is in far better pre-

servation. Here are graceful scrolls and mouldings of vine leaves and other devices curiously interwoven; the leaves so minutely carved that you may trace their veins and fringes. The arms of Brittany and France are also cunningly intertwined. Round the west doorway are wreaths of vines and thistles, with birds and serpents introduced amongst fruit and flowers. Above the doorway is an elaborate sculpture of the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi.



LANDERNEAU.

Joseph is represented—it is often the case in Breton carvings—as a Breton peasant, wearing the clumsy wooden shoes of the country. He would have found himself somewhat embarrassed in them when crossing the desert. But the Bretons, behind the rest of the world, had no ideas beyond those that came to them from practical experience, and the picturesque dignity of an Eastern dress was far beyond their imagination. The centre pier of the doorway is formed into a niche enclosing the basin for holy water, protected by a carved canopy of great beauty; but time and exposure have worn away much of the sharpness of the work.

The gables of the transept are decorated with open parapets; and

at the east end, below a rose window remarkable for its tracery, an arched niche protects the water of the fountain of Soloman the idiot: the actual spring itself being beneath the high altar.

These waters, like those of the lovely fountain of St. Jean du Doigt, are supposed to be miraculous, and are the object of many a pilgrimage, though fortunately for the village, the day of its *Pardon* is not the chief occasion for the assembling together of the blind, halt, maimed and withered folk of Brittany. But the pilgrims bathe in the waters, which are said to possess the gift of healing, and we know that faith alone will often perform miracles. As we looked upon the clear, transparent water, we felt at least the innocence of the charm, and therein a great virtue.

The interior of the church has been much praised by competent judges, and very justly so, for in its way it is very perfect. Yet, to us, its beauty was marked by a certain heaviness; and the "dim religious light" that adds so much to the effect of many an interior, here brought with it no sense of mystery. Perhaps it was not sufficiently subdued; or the heaviness of the stone may have had something to do with it. Also, it looked singularly small, in comparison with the exterior. It has been much altered since it was first built, and has lost nearly all its arches, which have been replaced by Gothic canopies in the form of ornamental projections.

Much of the interior is beautifully and elaborately sculptured, and will bear long and close inspection. The nave and aisles are under one roof, like the church of St. Jean du Doigt: an arrangement not always effective. The choir is short, as also are the aisles, the south transept being the longest of all. A very effective rood screen separates the choir from the nave. It is constructed of Kersanton stone, and consists of three round arches, above which are canopies supporting a gallery of open work decorated with quatrefoils. The effect is extremely rich and imposing; and the foliage of the screen is a perfect study of complications.

At the end of the south transept is the Fool's Chapel. The frescoes are a history of his life, which is yet further carried out in the windows and on the bas reliefs of the pulpit. The high altar under the rose window is very finely moulded, with its canopied niches and beautiful tracery. There are many statues of saints in the church, dressed in Breton costumes, that would no doubt astonish them if they came back to life and saw themselves in effigy. Many parts of the church are decorated with wonderful carvings of vegetables, fruit and flowers.

But the general impression is heavy and sombre, the true Kersanton effect and colour. Time and the elements have softened, subdued and beautified the exterior; but the tone of the interior, unexposed to the elements, remains what it originally was: wanting in refinement and romance; it is the beauty of elaborate execution that imposes upon one. All the windows are remarkable for their lovely Flamboyan tracery, that of the rose window being especially fine and delicate.

The exterior is far finer, far more wonderful. One never grew tired of gazing; of examining it from every point of view. It was a dream picture and a marvel. Nothing we saw in Brittany compared with it, excepting the Cathedral of Quimper. Before it stretched the dreary plain; behind it were the humble houses composing the village, very much out of sight and not at all aggressive.

On the south side was the Gothic college built by Anne of Brittany; and here she and Francis the First lodged, when they came on a pilgrimage to le Folgoët. It is a Gothic building of the fifteenth century, with an octagonal turret of rare design; but its beauty is of the past. We found it in the hands of the restorers, who were doing their best to ruin it. Originally it harmonised wonderfully with the church, but soon the harmony will have disappeared for ever.

Our carriage had gone on to the neighbouring town of Lesneven, to rest the horses and await our arrival, leaving us free to examine and loiter as we pleased. No one troubled us. The inhabitants were all away; or sleeping; or eating and drinking; the scene was as quiet and desolate as if the church had been in the midst of a desert.

But the time came when we must leave it to its solitude and go back into the world—the small but interesting world of Brittany; the world of slow-moving people and sleepy ways, and ancient towns full of wonderful outlines and mediæval reminiscences.

We took a last look round. We seemed alone in the world, no sight or sound of humanity anywhere; the very workmen despoiling the Gothic college had disappeared, leaving the mute witnesses of their vandalism in the form of scaffolding and very modern bricks and mortar. Beyond was a village street and small houses well closed and apparently deserted. Nearer to us rose the magnificent church, with its towers and spire, all its rich carving fringed against the background of the sky. The longer we looked, the more wonderful seemed its solemn and exquisite tone. The trees beneath which we stood waved and bent and rustled in the strong wind that blew; and beyond all stretched the dreary plain; dreary and desolate, but adding much to the charm of the picture. It was a scene never to be forgotten; but it was, after all, a scene appealing only to certain temperaments: to those who delight in the highest forms of architecture; in walls time-honoured and lichen-stained; who find beauty and charm ever in the blue sky and the waving trees; a charm that is chiefly spiritual.

Leaving the church behind us, and the dreary plain to our left, we passed into a country road with high hedges. This soon led us to a pathway across the fields. About a mile in the distance the steeples of Lesneven rose up and served us as beacons. The day was still young and the sun was high in the heavens. Small white clouds chased each other rapidly, driven by the strong wind that blew. We soon reached the quiet town and found it quiet with

a vengeance. Not knowing the way to the inn where our coachman had put up, it was some time before we could discover an inhabitant to direct us. At length we found a human being who had evidently come abroad under some mistaken impression, or in a fit of absence of mind. At the same time a child issued from a doorway. We felt quite in a small crowd. It was a humble child, but with a very charming and innocent expression; one of those faces that take possession of you at once and for ever. For it does not require days or weeks or months to know some people; moments will place you in intimate communion with them. You meet and suddenly feel that you must have known each other in some previous existence, so mutual is the recognition. But it is not so, for we have had no previous existence. It is nothing but the freemasonry of the spirit; soul going out to soul. For this reason the "love at first sight" that the poets have raved about in all the ages, and in all the ages mankind has laughed at, is probably as real as anything we know of; as real as our existence, the air we breathe, the heaven above us.

But we were at Lesneven, in the midst of the little crowd of two—we must not keep it waiting. And although the day is still young, yet the golden moments will fly, and the sun sinks rapidly westward.

So we inquired our way and were politely directed, and the little child declared it would be her pleasure to accompany us: "*il étoit si facile de s'égarer*," she declared, in very grown-up tones, and in her peculiar patois. *Il étoit.* We had not heard the old-fashioned expression since our childhood, in the villages of our native land.

We accepted the escort, and the little maiden chatted as freely as if we had been very old acquaintances. "She supposed that, like all strangers, we had been to see le Folgoët? It was a fine church, but its miraculous fountain was the best of all. Once, when she hurt her foot, grandpère carried her across the fields to the fountain. She bathed her foot in the water and said a prayer and offered a candle, and—vite, vite!—the foot was well. In three days she could run about. But that was two years ago, when she was a very little girl; now she was quite big."

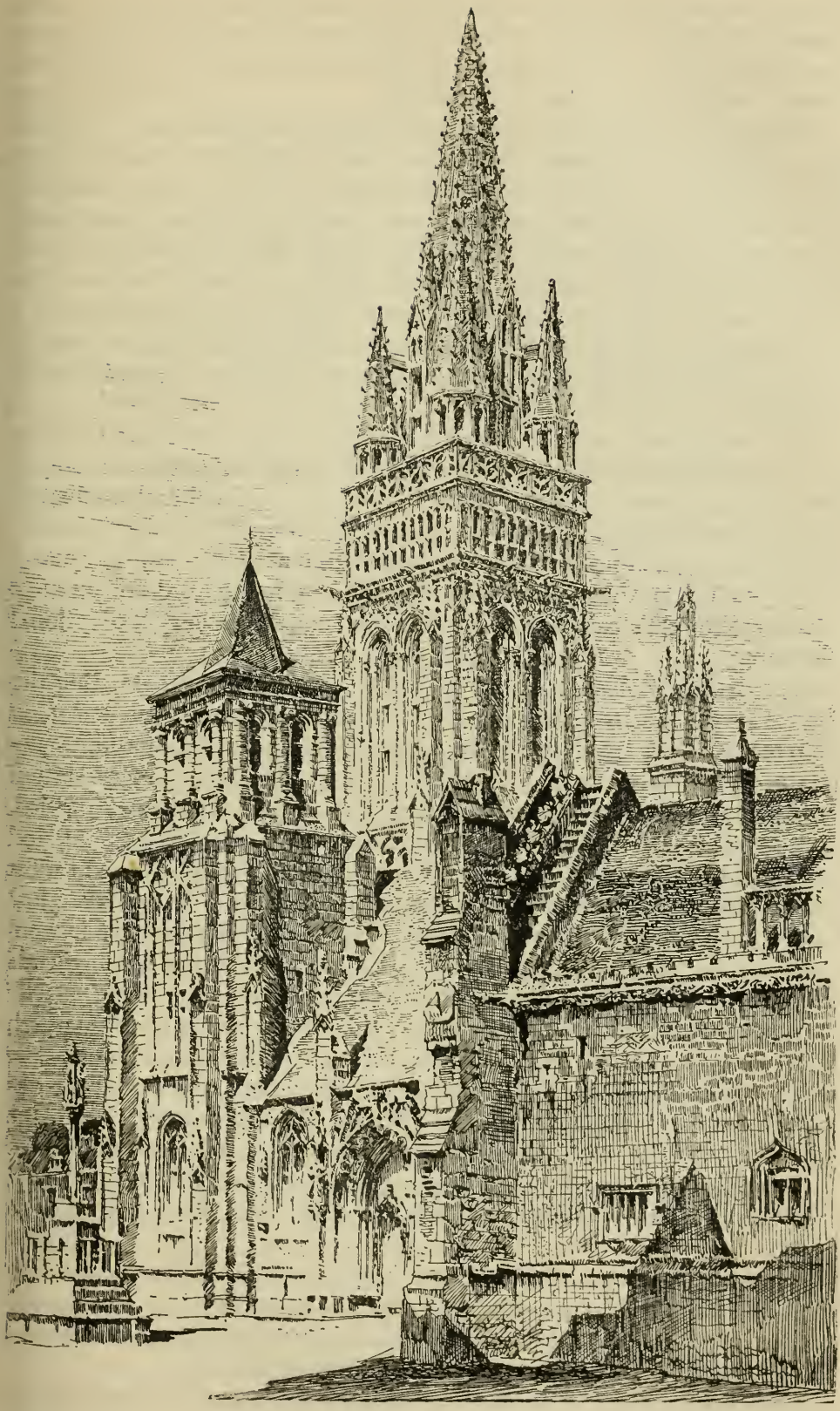
"How old was she now?"

"She was twelve, and very soon would do her first communion, dressed all in white, with a beautiful veil over her head. Should we not like to see her?"

"We should, very much."

"Could we not come again next year, when it would take place? She should so much like us to see her. Là! voilà l'hôtel!" she cried, passing rapidly from one subject to another, after the manner of childhood. "Now she must run back home. And we were to be sure and come again next year."

And before we could turn, the child had darted away, evidently to prevent the possibility of reward: a refined instinct for which we



Le Folgoët

should scarcely have given her credit. She may have been a Bretonne, but not a true Bretonne; her gracefulness and intelligence almost forbade it. Yet there are exceptions to every rule, and Nature herself delights in occasional surprises.

We found Lesneven very dull and sleepy, but picturesque. There was a singular old market-house of timber work, the quaintest we had ever seen; and some of the houses formed ancient and interesting groups. Our coachman had made an excellent déjeuner, if we were to judge by the self-satisfied expression of his face, which resembled the sun at mid-day seen through a red fog. He was now sitting in the courtyard under a very lovely creeper, drinking his coffee out of a tall glass, and of course smoking the pipe of peace. The creeper distinctly lent enchantment to the view: the coachman did not.

We wandered about whilst he made his preparations for starting. The market-place was broken and diversified in its outlines; one or two of the streets turning out of it looked quite gabled and mediæval. The covered market-house, with its curious roof and ancient timbers, gave it a very distinctive and very individual appearance; so that it now rises up in the memory as one of the many Breton pictures which make one's experience of the little country a very exceptional pleasure.

Out of the Collège poured a small stream of boys, startling the silence of the sleepy little town. We were mutually surprised at seeing each other. They looked and gazed, and walked around and about us—at a certain distance—and seemed as interested and perplexed as if we had been visitants from other regions clothed in unknown forms. But they manifested none of the delicacy of our little guide, and were not half so interesting. Yet probably the roughest and rudest boy amongst them might be the maiden's brother; for we have just said that Nature delights in surprises, and not infrequently in contradictions. The building they poured out of, now the Collège, was an ancient convent of the Récollets, dating from 1645.

A commotion in the courtyard of the "Grande Maison," which was just opposite the timber market-house, and the appearance of the driver on his box, in all the dignity of office, was our signal for departure. We looked back after leaving the town, and there in the distance, uprising towards the sky, was the lovely spire of le Folgoët, a monument to departed greatness, superstition, and religious fervour; a dream of beauty which will last, we may hope, for many ages to come.

We soon re-entered the road we had travelled earlier in the day; and in due time, after one or two narrow escapes of being overturned, so high was the wind, so blinding the dust, we re-entered Landerneau, a haven of refuge from the boisterous gale.

Our host had prepared us a sumptuous repast, of which the crowning glory was a pyramid of strawberries flanked on one side by

a ewer of the freshest cream, and on the other by a quaint old sugar basin of chased silver, of the First Empire period. Could mortals have desired more, even on Olympus—even in the Amaranthine fields of Elysium?

It was not yet the dinner-hour and we had it all to ourselves, with the waiter's undivided attention, who hoped we had not been disappointed in our little excursion. "He had been five years in Landerneau, but had never yet seen le Folgoët. Dame! he had no time for pilgrimages, and doubted whether, after all, they did much good. For his part, he didn't believe in miracles. Du reste, he had nothing the matter with him; was neither blind, lame, nor stupid—grâce au ciel, for he had his living to get. As for the church, to him one church was very much like another: and he would rather arrange a pyramid of strawberries than contemplate the spires of his native Quimper."

So true is it that water will not rise above its own level—and perhaps so merciful.

In due course we returned once more to our now old and familiar haunt, Morlaix. We came back to it each time with our affection and admiration heightened. Its old streets seem to grow more and more picturesque; and more and more we appeared to absorb into our "inner consciousness" this mediæval atmosphere. We seemed to be living in a perpetual romance of the past; and the men and women who surrounded us were so many puppets animated by invisible threads. It was the perfection of existence, in its particular way and for a short time.

The shades of evening had fallen when we once more found ourselves descending Jacob's Ladder. The Antiquarian's door was closed, but a light gleamed through the crevices of the shutters, as antiquated as some of his cherished possessions. We would not disturb him, though we felt sorely inclined to lift the latch and look in upon the picturesque interior. We imagined him perhaps telling his beads, his grey head bowed before the crucifix which, artistically and religiously, was the object of his veneration; mentally we saw the son bending over a plain piece of wood, which gradually assumed a form and design that would make it a thing of beauty for ever. By lifting the latch, all this would be revealed, delight our eyes and refresh our spirit. But what more might we see? The cherub probably was in bed, but the rift within the lute? Ah, that was uncertain; we could not tell. So we thought we would leave the picture to our imagination, where at least it was perfect.

So we went on without lifting the latch; and H. C. fell into raptures over the rising moon and the quaint gables that stood out so gloriously and mysteriously in the pale light. A warmer glow illumined many a lattice. We were surrounded by deep lights and shadows, and felt ourselves steeped in a world of the past, holding familiar intercourse with ghosts that haunted every nook and

crevice, every doorway, every niche and archway of this old-world town.

At the hotel, we found Madame Hellard taking the air at her doorway, her hands calmly folded in her favourite attitude of rest and contentment—or was it expectation?

"Was I not a prophet?" was her first greeting. "Did I not say this morning 'No umbrellas?' Have we not had a glorious day!"

"But the dust?" we objected.

"Ah!" cried Madame, "on oublie toujours le chat dans le coin, as they say in the Morbihan. Yet there must always be a drawback; you cannot have perfection; and I maintain that dust is better than rain. But what did you think of le Folgoët, messieurs?"

We declared that we could not give expression to our thoughts and emotions.

"A la bonne heure! Did I not tell you that we had nothing like it in our neighbourhood—or in any other, for all I know? Did I in the least exaggerate?"

We assured Madame that she had undercoloured her picture. The reality surpassed her ideal description.

"Ah!" cried Madame sentimentally, "our beau-idéals—when do we ever see them? But personally I cannot complain. I have a husband in ten thousand, and that, after all, should be a woman's beau-idéal, for it is her vocation. Oh!" with a little scream, pretending not to have heard her husband come up quietly behind her; "you did not hear me paying you compliments behind your back, Eugène? I assure you I meant the very opposite of what I said."

"If you are perverse, I shall not take you to the Regatta next Sunday," threatened Monsieur, in deep tones that very thinly veiled the affection lurking behind them.

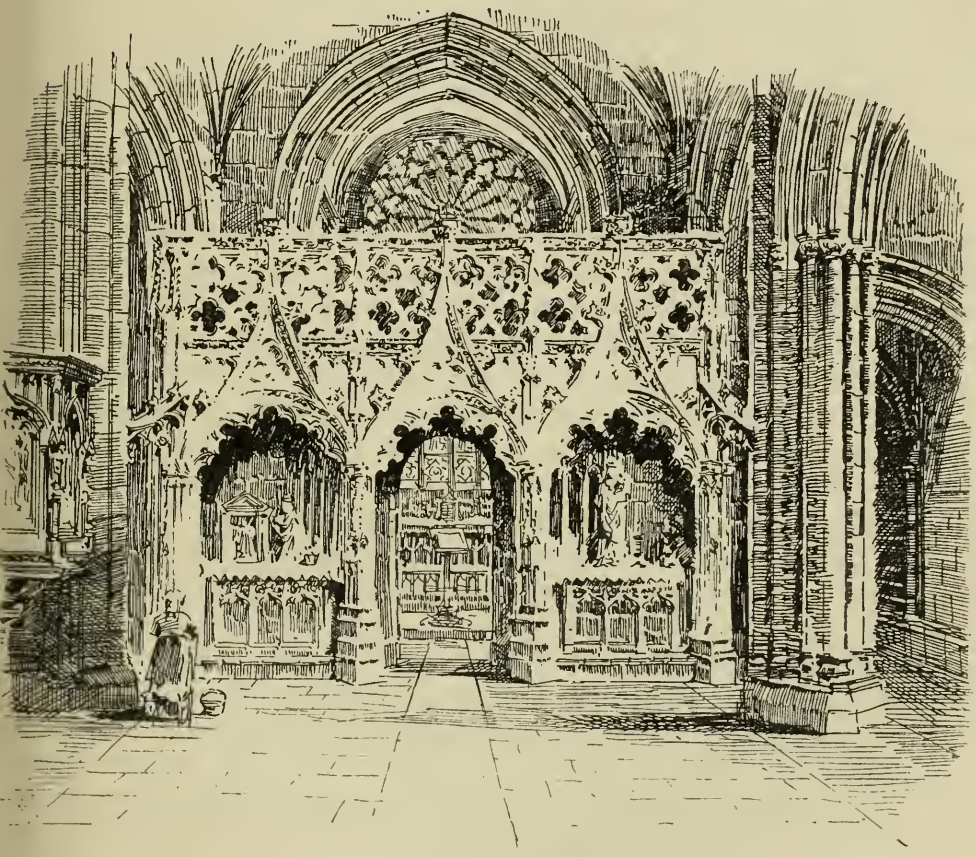
"The Regatta!" cried Madame. "Where should I find the time to go jaunting off to the Regatta? We have a wedding order to execute for that morning—my hands will be more than full. Figurez vous," turning to us, "a silly old widow is marrying quite a young man. She is rich, of course; and he has nothing, equally of course. And what does she expect will be the end of it? I cannot imagine what these people do with their common sense and their experience of life. But I always say we gain experience for the benefit of our friends: it enables us to give excellent advice to others, but we never think of applying it to ourselves."

"But the Regatta," we interrupted, more interested in that than in the indiscretions of the widow. "We knew nothing about it, and thought of leaving you on Saturday. Is it worth staying for?"

"Distinctly," replied Madame Hellard. "All Morlaix turns out for the occasion; all the world and his wife will be there. It is

quite a pretty scene, and the boats with their white sails look charming. You must drive down by the river side to the coast, and if the afternoon is sunny and warm, I promise you that you will not regret prolonging your stay with us."

This presented a favourable opportunity for a compliment, but at that moment Catherine's voice was heard in the ascendant; a passage-at-arms seemed to be in full play above; commotion was the order of the moment; and Madame rapidly disappeared to the



INTERIOR OF LE FOLGOËT, SHOWING SCREEN.

rescue. The compliment was lost for ever, but a dead calm was the immediate consequence of her presence. Catherine's authority had been defied, and the daring damsel had to be threatened with dismissal if it occurred again.

"Ma foi!" cried Catherine, as we met her on the staircase, "a pretty state of things we should have with two mistresses in the salle-à-manger! I should feel as much out of my element as a hen that has hatched duck's eggs, and sees her brood taking to the water."

"And apparently there would be as much clucking and commotion," we slily observed.

Catherine laughed. "Quite as much. I always say, whatever

you have to do, do it thoroughly; and if you have to put people down, let there be no mistake about it. By that means it won't occur again."

And Catherine went off with a very determined step and expression, her cap streamers flying on the breeze, to order us a light repast suited to the lateness of the hour. She was certainly Madame's right hand, and she ministered to our entertainment no less than to our necessities.

Sunday rose fair and promising; a whole week of sunshine and fine weather was a phenomenon in Brittany. Quite early in the morning the town was awake and astir, and it was evident that the good people of Morlaix were going in for the dissipation of a fête day.

The morning drew on, and everyone seemed to have turned out in their best apparel, though, to our sorrow, very few costumes made their appearance. The streets were crowded with sober Bretons, somewhat less sober than usual. Every vehicle in the town had been pressed into the service. Every omnibus was loaded inside and out; carts became objects of envy, and carriages were luxuries for which the drivers exacted their own terms. The river-side, to right and left, was lined with people, all hurrying towards the distant shore; for though many had secured seats in one or other of the delectable vehicles, they were few in comparison with the numbers that, from motives of economy or exercise, preferred to walk. It was a gay and lively scene, and, sober Bretons though they were, the air echoed with song and laughter. Rioting there was none.

The distance was about five miles; but something more than the last mile had to be taken on foot by everyone. We had secured a victoria which was not much larger than a bath chair, but in a crowd this had its advantage. True, we felt every moment as if the whole thing would fall to pieces, but in case of shipwreck there were plenty to come to the rescue.

Nothing happened, and we walked our last mile with sound wind and limbs. Much of the way lay on a hill-side. Cottages were built on the slopes, and we walked upon zigzag paths, through front gardens and back gardens, now level with the ground floor window, now looking into an attic; and now—if we wished—able to peer down the chimney or join the cats on the roof.

At last we came to the sea, which stretched away in all its beauty, shining and shimmering in the sunshine. In the bay formed by this and the opposite coast, the boats taking part in the races were flitting about like white-winged messengers, full of life and grace and buoyancy. Some of the races were over, some were in progress.

Our side of the shore was beautifully backed by green slopes rising to wooded heights. In the select inclosure, for the privilege of entering which a franc was charged, the élite of Morlaix walked to and

fro, or sat upon long rows of chairs placed just above the beach. We did not think very much of them and were disappointed. All round and about us, rich and poor alike were clothed in modern-day costumes, as ugly and ungainly and ill-worn as any that we see around us in our own fair, but—in this respect—by no means faultless isle.

The few costumes that formed the exception were not graceful; those at least worn by the men. Umbrellas were in full array, and as there was no rain they put them up for the sunshine. A large proportion of the crowd took no interest whatever in the races, which attracted attention and applause only from those either sitting or standing on the beach. The crowded green behind gave its attention to anything rather than the sea and the boats. More general interest was manifested in the sculling matches; especially in the race of the fish-women—tall, strong females, the very picture of health and vigour, becomingly dressed in caps and short blue petticoats, who started in a pair of eight-oared boats, and rowed valiantly in a very well-matched contest until it was lost and won. As the sixteen women, victors and vanquished, stepped ashore, the phlegmatic crowd was stirred in its emotions, and loud applause greeted them. They filed away, laughing and shaking their heads, or looking down modestly and smoothing their aprons, each according to her temperament, and were soon lost in the crowd.

On the slopes in sheltered spots, vendors of different wares, chiefly of a refreshing description, had installed themselves. The most popular and the most picturesque were the pancake women, who, on their knees, beat up the batter, held the frying pans over a charcoal fire, and tossed the pancakes with a skill worthy of Madame Hellard's chef. Their services were in full force, and it was certainly not a graceful exhibition to see the Breton boys and girls, of any age from ten to twenty, devouring these no doubt delicious delicacies with no other assistance than their own fairy fingers. After all, they were enjoying themselves in their own fashion and looked as if they could imagine no greater happiness in life.

We wandered away from the scene, round the point, where stretched another portion of the coast of Finistère. It was a lovely vision. The steep cliffs fell away at our feet to the beach, here quite deserted and out of sight of the crowd not very far off. Over the white sand rolled and swished the pale green water with most soothing sound. The sun shone and sparkled upon the surface. The bay was wide, and on the opposite coast rose the cliffs crowned by the little town of Roscoff, its grey towers sharply outlined against the sky. Our thoughts immediately went back to the day we had spent there; to the quiet streets of St. Pol de Léon, and its beautiful church, and the charming Countess who had exercised such rare hospitality and taken us to fairy-land.

The vision faded as we turned our backs upon the sea and the crowd and entered upon our return journey. The zigzag was passed

and the houses, where now we looked down the chimneys and now into the cellars. In due time we came to the high road. It was crowded with vehicles all waiting the end of the races and the return of the multitude. Apparently it was "first come, first served," for we had our choice of all—a veritable embarras de choix. It was made and we started. Very soon, on the other side the river, we came in sight of our little auberge, *A la halte des Pêcheurs*, where on a memorable occasion we had taken refuge from a second deluge. And there, at its door, stood Madame Mirmiton, anxiously looking down the road for the return of her husband from the Regatta. Whether he had recovered from his sprain, or had found a friendly conveyance to give him a seat, did not appear.

We went our way; the river separated us from the inn and there was no ferry at hand. Many like ourselves were returning; there was no want of movement and animation. It was not a picturesque crowd, for there were no costumes, and the *bourgeoisie* of Morlaix are not more interesting than others of their class.

At last loomed upon us the great viaduct, and a train rolled over as we rolled under it. The vessels in the little port had mounted their flags and looked gay, in honour of the occasion. We entered Morlaix for the last time, for we were to leave on the morrow. Madame Hellard was not taking the air; she and Monsieur were enjoying a moment's repose in the bureau. They now invariably greeted us as *habitués* of the house.

"But you have neither of you been to the Regatta," we observed.

"I go nowhere without my wife," gallantly responded our host.

"And I was too busy with our wedding breakfast to think of anything else," said Madame. "And, to tell you the truth, I don't care for regattas. I can see no pleasure in watching which of two or which of half-a-dozen boats comes in first. The people interest me; but it is really almost as amusing to see them passing one's own door, and not half so tiring. I hope, messieurs, you have returned with good appetites: I have ordered you some *crêpes*. Was it not funny to see the old women tossing them on the slopes?"

"Al fresco fêtes," chimed in Monsieur. "Ah, la jeunesse! la jeunesse! Youth is the time for enjoyment. *Donnez-moi vos vingt ans si vous n'en faites rien!* So says the old song—so say I. And now you are going to leave us, and to-morrow we shall be in total eclipse," he added, determined not to leave us out in his compliments. "But you are right—you cannot stay here for ever. You have seen all that is of note in Morlaix and the neighbourhood, and you will be charmed with Quimper."

"Quimper? I would rather live fifty years in Morlaix than a hundred in Quimper," cried Catherine, who came in at that moment for the menus. "The river smells horribly, the town is dirty and stuffy, and it always rains there. And as for the hotels—enfin, *you will see!*"

MORLAIX.

It was very certain that we should not alight upon another Catherine.

For the last time we wandered out that night when the moon had risen, to take our farewell of the old streets that had given us so much pleasure. We knew them well, and felt that we were communing with old friends. Their outlines, their gabled roofs, the deep shadows cast by the pale moonlight, the warmer reflections from the beautiful latticed windows—all charmed us. We moved in an ancient world, conversed with ghosts of a long-past age; the shades of those who had left behind them so much of the artistic and the excellent; who had, in their day and hour, lived and breathed and moved even as the world of to-day—had been animated with the same thoughts and emotions; in a word, had fulfilled their lot and passed through their birthright of sorrow and suffering.

It was late before we could turn away from the fascination. After the crowded scenes of the day, we seemed surrounded by the very silence and repose, the majesty of Death. Everyone had retired to rest; the curfew had long tolled, and the fires were nearly all out. Only here and there a lighted lattice spoke of a late watcher, who perhaps was searching for the philosopher's stone or the elixir of life, wherewith to turn the grey hairs of age to the flowing locks of youth—the feeble gait of one stricken in years to the vigour and comeliness of manhood. Vain wish! and needless; for why will they not look at life in its truer aspect, and feel that the nearer they approach to death the younger they are growing?

MY MAY-QUEEN

(*Ætat* 4).

Come, child, that I may make
A primrose wreath to crown thee Queen of Spring!
Of thee the glad birds sing;
For thee small flowers fling
Their lives abroad; for thee—for Dorothea's sake!

Hasten! For I must pay
Due homage to thee, have thy Royal kiss,
Our thrush shall sing of this;
—In many a bout of bliss
Tell how I crown'd thee Queen, Spring's Queen, this glad May-day

JOHN JERVIS BERESFORD, M.A.

SWEET NANCY.

SHENTON was a dull and sleepy village at the best of times; but then it was situated so far from any town. Exboro' was the nearest, and that was ten miles away. To reach it you must traverse a range of pine-clad hills, descending now and again into cool valleys, full of sweet scents and sounds in summer, but dreary enough in winter, when the snow lay thick and the wind whistled through the leafless branches.

Shenton consisted of one long street, terminating in a green on which the church and school-house stood. After that there were no more houses till you reached Exboro', excepting a few scattered farms a mile or two away at Braley Brook. There was also a large farm, known as the Manor, half-a-mile in the opposite direction, occupied by one Jacob Hurst, who was the owner of the farms at Braley Brook.

The last house in the long street, at the Green end of it, was occupied by Miss Michin, a milliner and dressmaker, as a card in the window informed the passer-by. Not that the card was necessary, as of course in so small a place everybody knew everybody else; but it was a sort of sign of office, and was always most carefully replaced when Sarah Ann, Miss Michin's Lilliputian maid, cleaned the window, which she did much oftener than was necessary—at least, Mrs. Dodd, the post-mistress, who lived opposite, said so. But then Mrs. Dodd had the shop and a young family to attend to, and did not find it possible to keep her own windows equally bright; so it was perhaps natural that she should find a comfort in remarking on her opposite neighbour in the manner we have described.

Miss Michin's front parlour window was draped with white muslin curtains, which covered it entirely, preventing the eyes of the curious from taking surreptitious glances at the finery therein displayed, and destined to be seen for the first time at church on the persons of the fortunate owners. Just now, a fortnight before Christmas, the array of gay dress material which lay about on tables and chairs was more than usual; and Miss Michin and Nancy Forest—her decidedly pretty apprentice—were working as if their lives depended upon it. Nancy was the only apprentice Miss Michin had, and she had taken her when she was fourteen without a premium, on condition that when she should be "out of her time" (that would be in three years) she should give six months' work in payment for the instruction she had received.

Nancy was now working out the six months, which fact shows her age to be between seventeen and eighteen. At that age a girl—above all, a pretty girl—likes to wear pretty things; and Nancy had

many little refined tastes which other girls in her class of life have not—due, perhaps, to the fact that while a child she had been a sort of protégée of Miss Sabina Hurst's up at the Manor Farm. Miss Sabina, who was herself not quite a lady, was nevertheless far above the Forests, who were in their employ, and had charge of an old farm-house at Braley Brook. She was Mr. Hurst's sister, and had been mistress at the Manor since Mrs. Hurst had died in giving birth to her little son Fred.

Mr. Hurst—a hard and relentless man in most things—was almost weak in his indulgence of his son. All his fancies must be gratified, and in this Miss Sabina concurred. One of Fred's fancies had been to make a playmate of little Nancy Forest. It followed, then, that she had been a great deal at the Manor; but when the children grew older, and Fred took what his aunt and father termed "an absurd fancy" to be a musician, as his mother had been, it occurred to them that possibly later on he might take a yet more absurd idea, and want to marry his old playmate. Nancy was therefore banished from the Manor Farm.

But Fred, who was not accustomed to be crossed, often met his old friend on the hills and in the valleys; and after she had become apprenticed, he would often walk home with her part way—not as a lover, however. For the last two months he had broken this habit, and Nancy had not seen him.

But we were saying that girls of Nancy's age liked pretty things to wear. Nancy was no exception, but she had no pretty things; her clothes had, in fact, become deplorably shabby, though by dexterous "undoing" and "doing-up" she did manage to make the very most of her dark blue serge costume. The dress and rather coquettish little jacket were of the same material; and she had a felt hat of the same colour, which in some mysterious way altered its shape to suit the varying fashions. Last winter the wide brim was straight; this winter it was turned up at the back, with a bunch of dark blue ribbons on the crown. Altogether her appearance was picturesque, though the odd mingling of the rustic with the latest Paris fashion-plate might call up a smile to your lips. The smile which the costume provoked was sure to die, however, when you looked at the girl's face. You wondered at once why the lovely brown eyes looked so sad and appealing, and why the little mouth was so tremulous, and why the colour came and went so frequently on the finely-moulded cheeks, which were just a little thin for perfect beauty. And if you happened to be a student of human nature, you would read in one of Nancy's glances a story of conflicting emotions—disappointment, timid expectancy, hope, and a dawning despair: at least, this is what I read there when I looked at Nancy from the Vicar's pew one Sunday morning at Shenton church. I was on a visit at the Vicarage then.

Of course, it must not be supposed that Miss Michin read Nancy

Forest's face in this way; but the little dressmaker had a warm heart, though worried by the making of garments, and more by making two ends meet which nature had apparently not intended for such close proximity; but she had certainly noticed that for the last few weeks Nancy had not looked well.

It was growing dark one Thursday evening, and Sarah Ann had just brought the lamp into her mistress's parlour. Miss Michin turned up the light slowly, remarking, as she did so, "I don't want this glass to crack. I might do nothing else but buy lamp-glasses if I left the turning-up of them to Sarah Ann. This one has been boiled, which, Mrs. Dodd says, is a good thing to make them stand heat." Then she broke off suddenly, and stared at her apprentice, exclaiming, "Nancy, child, how pale you look! You must leave off and go home. You shall have a nice cup of tea first. Where do you feel bad?"

The sympathetic tone brought the tears to Nancy's eyes, perhaps more than the words, but she answered hastily: "Oh, indeed, dear Miss Michin, I need not go home. I have a headache, that is all, and I must not leave off before my time. I ought to stop later, and you so busy."

"That frock of Emma Dodd's is just on finished, isn't it?" said Miss Michin, in answer.

"All but the hooks," replied Nancy.

"Then sew them on while I make some tea, and you can leave it at the post-office as you go."

Nancy protested, but Miss Michin insisted, and in a short time the dress was pinned up in a dark cloth, and Nancy having drunk the tea, more to please her kind friend than because she thought it would cure her headache, donned the little jacket and fantastic hat, and went across to the post-office, which was also a shop of a general description.

Mrs. Dodd was engaged in lighting her shop-window when Nancy entered.

"I have brought Emma's dress, Mrs. Dodd," she began, when that lady had descended from the high stool on which she had mounted to place the lamps in the window. "Miss Michin told me to tell you there wasn't enough of the plush to finish off the lappets to match the collar and cuffs, but she thinks you'll like it just as well as is."

Mrs. Dodd examined the little dress, and, having approved of it, asked in a friendly way what Nancy herself was going to have new this Christmas.

"Oh, I don't know yet," answered Nancy, colouring deeply. "You see, I'm not earning yet, and father's wages are small, you know."

"Mr. Hurst is real mean, I know that," exclaimed the post-mistress, decidedly. "None but a very mean man would have cut

your poor father's wages down after he was laid up with a bad leg so long."

"But father says himself that he can't do as much since his accident, and he doesn't want to be paid beyond what he earns," Nancy explained, hastily.

Mrs. Dodd began to fold up Emma's dress, remarking, as she did so, "It's a queer go as Mr. Hurst should have let young Mr. Fred do nothink but music; but, to be sure, he do play beautiful. My Benny, as blows the organ for him, says it's 'eavenly what he makes up himself. He's uncommon handsome, too; much like his mother, who was, poor young lady, a heap too good for the likes of Jacob Hurst. She used to play the church organ like the angel Gabriel."

Mrs. Dodd glanced at Nancy to see the effect of this simile, which was quite an inspiration, but the girl was intent on smoothing the creases out of her very old and much-mended kid gloves.

"Folks do say, Miss Nancy," went on Mrs. Dodd, "as young Mr. Fred had a fancy for you at one time, and as you sent him to the rightabouts. Now, I say as ——"

"Oh, please don't say anything about it, Mrs. Dodd," broke out Nancy, excitedly. "It's all a mistake—I am not his equal in any way—he never thought of anything like that." She would have added, "Nor I;" but she was too truthful. An overwhelming sense of shame came over her. How could she have given her heart away unsought!

With a hasty good-night she left the shop, closing the door so sharply in her self-condemnation as to set the little bell upon it ringing as if it had gone mad. She could hear its metallic tinkle till she was close upon the church. Here other sounds filled her ears. There was a light in the church, and Fred Hurst was there playing one of Bach's Fugues.

Nancy's heart fluttered like a captive bird. For a brief space she leaned against the cold railings, looking intently at a branch of ivy which the north wind was tossing against the diamond-shaped panes of the window—then she drew herself up hastily and proudly, and walked on rapidly towards the bleak hills which she must cross to reach her father's farm at Braley Brook.

"How I wish I was out of my time," she said to herself, as the crisp snow crackled beneath her small feet. "I could go away then and earn my living, where I could never see him—or hear him—. Oh, Fred!" she broke out in what was almost a cry, "*why* have you met me and walked with me so often, if you meant to leave off and say no more? It must be because my dress has grown so shabby—I don't look so—so nice as I did—yet if his father were not hard I might have more." And poor Nancy being now far from any habitation gave herself the relief of a good cry, knowing she could not be observed.

In the meantime the organ at the church had ceased playing, and

the young man who was seated at it began turning over a pile of music which lay beside him. But this he did mechanically—he was not going to play again that evening, he did it as an accompaniment to perplexed thought. He remained so long silent that Benny Dodd, who had been "blowing" for him, ventured out from among the shadows cast by the organ pipes and asked, "Please, Mr. Fred, are you going to play any more?"

Fred Hurst looked up smiling, and feeling in his waistcoat pocket for the customary coin, said cheerfully, "I had quite forgotten you, Benny! No, I shall not play any more to-night."

The small boy clattered down the stone aisle noisily, and Fred Hurst began to push in the stops preparatory to closing the organ. In doing so he caught a glimpse of his face in the small mirror which hung at one side, and he burst out laughing.

"What a tragic look I have managed to put on," he thought. Then he locked the organ, and was about to blow out the candles, when he changed his mind and took out a scrap of printed paper from his pocket and read it by their light. It was a favourable review of a song he had composed, and which had just been published. "Though there is no genius displayed in this little composition, it is extremely pleasing; the air is catching, and the accompaniment is tuneful without ostentation. 'Winged Love' should become a popular favourite." This is what he read; and having read it (of course not for the first time), he seemed to form a sudden resolution on the strength of it. He looked at his watch; it marked a few minutes past six; he blew out the lights and left the church, hesitating a moment by the railings on which Nancy had leaned an hour before. "I think this justifies me," he meditated. "If 'Winged Love' is so well spoken of I am sure to get on, and in time make an income sufficient for us two: poor child, she hasn't been used to luxuries, and a simple home would content her. She must be part way home by now. Yes, I will follow Nancy, and explain why I have not met her for so long, and ask her to love me and wait till I can ask her to be my wife."

But Nancy Forest had left Shenton early, as we have seen, so Fred Hurst did not overtake her. He went all the way to Braley Brook, however, and right up to the ruinous old farmhouse where the Forests lived, and waited in the orchard some time, hoping that Nancy would come out to bring in some linen which hung to bleach among the bare apple trees. He knew that Nancy always helped her mother in the evenings. But on this evening no errand seemed to bring her out of doors, and Fred Hurst went away without seeing her, meaning to meet her next day.

It would have been wiser if Fred had gone boldly to the farmhouse and asked to see Nancy; but we are none of us wise at all times, and we have generally to pay in pain for our lack of wisdom as well as for our actual faults, though perhaps not in the same degree.

II.

Fred Hurst's father was Nancy's father's master, as we have seen; and a hard enough master, as Mrs. Dodd had said. John Forest and his family—that is, his wife and Nancy—lived in the only habitable part of what had once been a considerable farmhouse. John worked on the "land," took care of the horses and other live stock—there were not many—and his wife attended to the poultry, which were numerous enough. She also earned a little by mending the holes which the rats bit in the corn-sacks. In harvest-time she made gentian beer for the men, and a kind of harvest cake, originally made for a four o'clock meal, which explains the word known as "fourses." But with all these little extras the Forests found it sufficiently hard to live, and of course Nancy was not yet earning.

"You ought to have sent that girl of yours to service," Mr. Hurst would not infrequently say to Nancy's mother. He, moreover, said the same thing to his maiden sister Sabina, when Fred was present.

It was then that Fred's eyes opened to the fact that Nancy Forest was more to him than anything else in the world—far, far more than the old playmate he had thought her. Send Nancy to service! sweet, delicate, lady-like little Nancy, with her dimpled white hands. Perhaps Nancy had no business to have white hands, and dainty, refined ways; but she had, and that was Aunt Sabina's fault for having her so much at the Manor. It was partly nature's fault, too, certainly, for Nancy had always seemed like a changeling, she was so above her surroundings.

Fred Hurst having thus discovered his own love, proceeded to discover Nancy's. It was all clear to him now, he was sure she had given her pure childlike heart to him, perhaps unwittingly, as he had done. How blind he had been! With knowledge, caution came. Fred made up his mind that he must no more walk with Nancy till he was prepared to do so in his true character—that of a lover. This would be impossible till he could offer a home to Nancy. It might be that his father would even turn the Forests away, if he suspected his son's affection for their only child. He could not risk that. So two months passed.

Fred was organist at the parish church and had been composing songs, as we have seen. Most of them had come back to him accompanied by polite notes of refusal; one or two had come out and failed to attract any notice. Now, "Winged Love" was proving a success—so he had resolved to speak to Nancy herself, though not yet to the parents on either side.

It was a pity he didn't take the straightforward course—it pays best, did people but know it. Had Fred Hurst gone to the house boldly that night, it might, as I have said, have saved much misery. Had he glanced through the uncurtained window of the "house-

place," I think he would certainly have gone in, for he would have seen Nancy in tears.

Mrs. Forest was a woman whose temper could not have been sweet under the best of conditions. It will be understood, then, that it developed into something very bad indeed under the worrying influence of a master like Mr. Hurst, who was never satisfied, and whose method of dealing with those he employed was one of incessant bullying. He was, moreover, subject to delusions about being cheated, and his suspiciousness was always in evidence.

This last fault was also one of Mrs. Forest's own, and if anything a worse one than her bad temper, and was not infrequently the occasion of an exhibition of the latter. When Nancy got home from Miss Michin's on the night when Fred Hurst tried to meet her, she found her mother in one of her worst moods. Mr. Hurst had been there all the morning, superintending the killing and packing of the turkeys for the London market. Nancy had made up her mind on her way home to ask her mother for a little money to buy herself some new gloves. She resolved to make her request at once on entering the house-place, where her mother was—partly from a desire to get what generally proved a disagreeable business over as soon as possible, and more, perhaps, because she saw her father sitting smoking his pipe in the chimney-corner. John Forest usually supported his daughter, who was a great favourite of his. He generally called her "Sweet Nancy," because she was so pretty and dainty, and, above all, so good-tempered—a quality he knew how to appreciate.

"I was wondering, mother," Nancy began hesitatingly, as she removed her hat and advanced towards the wood fire, above which Mrs. Forest was hooking-on a huge kettle of fowls' food—"I was wondering if I might have some new gloves for Christmas."

"And where, I should like to know, is the money for them to come from?" demanded the mother sharply. "I want lots of things I go without. It takes all I can scrape and spare to buy saucers for them chickens to break. It's a shame of the master not to buy proper drinking dishes for them; and when I asked him for some, he said your father could dig a hole and sink the old copper-boiler in it, and fill that with water for them, just as if he hadn't the sense to see as how every blessed chicken 'ud get drowned, and me be blamed for it, as usual."

"Here is half-a-sovereign as the master gave me for you to pay for the sacks. Couldn't Nancy have some of that?" inquired John, fumbling in his pocket for the coin.

Mrs. Forest took the money from his hand and placed it upon the chimney-piece, intending to put it away presently in the tea-pot in the corner cupboard, which, however, she forgot to do, otherwise this story would never have been written.

"I want all that ten shillings to get a new cocoa-matting for the

front room floor," she said, decidedly. "The bricks strike as cold as a grave since the old matting was took up."

"I must go and grind the turmits for the sheep, and move 'em into the other fold for the night," said John, knocking out the ashes from his pipe and rising to go. As he was closing the door behind him he called to his wife, "You let the cocoa-matting bide, and give Nan a shilling or two for her gloves."

"That I shall do nothing of the sort, then," shouted Mrs. Forest after her husband; then, turning on her daughter angrily, she asked: "What do you want gloves at all for, I should like to know? I don't wear gloves; and why should you, who do nothing to earn them?"

"I shall be out of my time soon," Nancy answered, beginning to cry; "and I will pay you back then all I have cost."

"I daresay," sneered her mother; "it'll take all you can earn to deck yourself out to catch young Mr. Fred's eyes. Don't you think as I'm not sharp enough to see which way the wind blows."

"Mother!" cried Nancy, rising indignantly to her feet, her eyes flashing, her cheeks burning with shame and anger. "How dare you talk to me so? You have no right!"

"Haven't I no right?" almost shrieked Mrs. Forest. "I stand none of your impudence!" And with these words her passion so took possession of her that she leaned forward and with her open hand struck her daughter a stinging blow on one of her cheeks. "You are fond of crying," she said, "so take something to cry for—for once."

But Nancy did not cry: she stood still, staring in a bewildered way at the burning log upon the hearth, the flame from which danced upon her reddened cheek.

Had Fred remained a little longer in the orchard, trouble might have been prevented; for he would have seen Nancy, whom Mrs. Forest sent to bring in the new linen which was bleaching. Mrs. Forest gave her this to do, because she could not bear to see her stand so silent and dazed. She was, indeed, heartily ashamed of the act she had committed the moment it was over, but knew what was done couldn't be undone. She had never struck her daughter before, and resolved never to do so again; but it did not occur to her to tell Nancy so. Had she done so, the warm-hearted child would have responded at once to such an advance; but she only said: "Well, well; have done staring in the fire, Nan; and run and fetch the linen from the orchard."

Nancy obeyed mechanically, little knowing who had just left the spot, and feeling in her young heart all the bitterness of utter desolation.

III.

A NIGHT of sorrow is said to give place to a morning of joy. This would be a comforting thought were it not that the morning must likewise give place in its turn to another night.

The morning which followed the night of Nancy Forest's bitter humiliation was certainly a bright one—at least, by contrast; and, unfortunately, much so-called happiness is only such. Were the world not a dark and naughty one, a good deed might not shine so brightly. In the first place, Nancy was young and healthy; so the wintry sun, though it shone on a frozen ground, cheered her. Then Mrs. Forest was unusually amiable at breakfast, and paid some attention to her daughter, which she generally found herself too busy to do. Her father made much of her, as was his habit. He had apparently heard nothing of last night's episode.

The walk across the hills to Shenton was exhilarating, and at the end of it a pleasant surprise awaited Nancy. She found Miss Michin already at work on a dress for Miss Sabina Hurst when she arrived. The good-natured little woman greeted her apprentice brightly. "You are looking better, Nancy; the walk has given you a colour." Then she reached out her hand to a table near her, and took a little parcel from it and gave it to Nancy.

"It is nothing," she explained, as the girl looked at it curiously. "Open it, dear; it is a trifle for a Christmas gift. I wish it was more."

Nancy could only say "Oh, Miss Michin—how kind!" to begin with. Then she unwrapped the paper and saw a dainty pair of brown kid gloves with ever so many buttons. This matter of the buttons was not unimportant in Nancy's eyes. Had her mother given her the money, she thought, she could never have bought gloves with more than *two* buttons.

"This is just what I needed—oh, thank you so much," she exclaimed, when she had looked at them.

"That was what I thought," said the dressmaker; "so now we must set to work and get a good day."

And Nancy did work well that day, never looking up from her work, except once to glance across to the Post-office at the time she knew Benny Dodd usually came out to go to the church. She could not see Fred, so it was some pleasure to her to look at the small boy who blew the organ for him.

But Benny did not perform that office for the young musician on this day, for Fred Hurst had gone to London that morning, summoned thither by a letter from Messrs. Hermann and Scheiner, music publishers. The marked success of "Winged Love" had disposed these gentlemen to make the young composer a good offer for his next song. The more immediate cause of their determination was the fact that Señor Florès had chosen to sing "Winged Love"

at the last Saturday afternoon concert at St. James' Hall, and its reception had been such as to establish a certain sale for songs from the same hand. "Who is this Fred Hurst?" people in London were asking.

Miss Sabina, in her showy drawing-room up at the Manor Farm, thought over the event all day in her own critical way, and predicted evil as the result. There was an old Broadwood grand piano in the room where she sat, covered with a pile of old music—Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Haydn, and all the composers whose music Miss Sabina disliked. This music had belonged to Fred's mother, a fair and unfortunate creature, whose own story I shall some day write. Miss Sabina's performances upon the pianoforte were limited to such compositions as the "Canary Birds' Quadrilles," "My Heart is Over the Sea," etc., which she never played at all now. But she looked at the old piano, and recalled her sister-in-law's pretty baby looks and tragic end, and prophesied evil for Fred. Jacob Hurst laughed the whole business to scorn. The one being in Shenton who could have genuinely rejoiced at Fred's success knew nothing about it.

Nancy's thoughts were constantly with him, however, and when her work ended for the day, and she walked homeward across the hills to Braley Brook, she connected many an inanimate object she passed with some look or word of his. These looks and words had always been so kind, so gentle, that as the brook, where the forget-me-nots grew in summer, or the bank in the hollow where the primroses grew thickest in spring, or the fallen tree, which, as the weeks passed, would become golden with moss and lichen again—as all these would awaken to summer sunshine and gladness—so would her heart. Fred's love for her—she felt sure he had loved her—was only hidden away like the flowers under the snow, to bloom forth again in spring. It was her winter, that was all, she told herself. She must wait as the flowers did.

When she reached home, her mind was filled with hope—hope which but too soon was to give place to despair. Last night Mrs. Forest had struck her—but then she had not looked nearly so angry as she did now when her daughter appeared before her.

"Where is my ten shillings?" she cried menacingly, as Nancy closed the kitchen-door behind her. "What have you done with it, you ungrateful, unnatural girl?" she repeated loudly.

"Indeed, mother, I know nothing of it," poor Nancy answered, trembling violently.

"Is it in that there teapot?" inquired the enraged mother, thrusting the article in question close to the frightened girl's face. Nancy glanced rapidly from the empty teapot to the chimney-piece.

"You needn't look there, you hussy," Mrs. Forest continued, seeing the direction Nancy's eyes were taking. "There's *nothing* on the chimney-piece—the money's gone, and you've took it, because your father said you were to—it wasn't his to give—did he mend the

sacks? tell me that! I'll have my money back—every halfpenny, so you'd better give it me before I make you."

"Mother, I have not touched it; I know nothing about it, really I don't," said Nancy desperately.

"What's that you've got in your hand?" demanded Mrs. Forest, catching sight of the parcel containing the gloves.

Nancy did not answer; she was looking at the round table, which was covered with the shining brass ornaments which had been removed from the chimney-piece in the search for the missing coin. There they were—candlesticks, pans, snuffer-tray, and beer-warmer, articles she remembered from earliest childhood as never in use, and always highly polished. Now as the firelight flickered upon them they seemed to be looking at the distracted girl with countless fiery eyes which twinkled in malice. Nancy could not take her eyes from these other eyes, she could not think for the moment. She vaguely knew that her mother took away her parcel, and presently Mrs. Forest's rasping voice recalled her from her stupefied reverie.

"So you spent it in gloves, did you? Six-buttoned ones, too—! Oh, you ungrateful, selfish, wasteful girl."

"Mother, mother," wailed Nancy, taking hold of Mrs. Forest's gown with one hand convulsively, while she pressed the other to her brow, where her wavy locks of hair lay all damp and ruffled. "You *should* believe—you *must* believe me—Miss Michin gave me the gloves—I have never seen your money—oh, mother, I couldn't have touched it—I *couldn't*."

"Don't add lies to it," broke out Mrs. Forest in a greater passion than ever.

Than this last remark, nothing could have easily been more unjust. Nancy had always been a very truthful child.

"If you can no longer trust me, it is perhaps better for me—to—to go away," said Nancy, softly.

"Yes—go—go now," replied her mother, who had arrived at that stage of rage when people use words little heeding their meaning.

Nancy buttoned her little jacket once more, and tied a silk handkerchief round her neck, and passed out at the door in a wild, hurried fashion.

Mrs. Forest looked at the door and smiled. "She'll none go," she said to herself; "where could she go *to?*"

But Nancy did not resemble her mother in hasty moods, she was rather the subject of permanent impressions. Her mother's conduct had wounded her to the quick. She could no longer endure it, she thought. Hitherto, her father's love had rendered it bearable—but now, even that seemed powerless to keep her under the same roof as her mother. Where could she go? She would walk on, no matter in what direction; then, when she could walk no more, she might perhaps be calm enough to think.

IV.

"WHERE is Nan?" asked John Forest, when he entered the house, an hour after Nancy had left it.

"Oh, she'll be here presently," replied the mother evasively. Of course Nancy would come soon, she thought to herself, and what was the use of rousing John?

Another hour passed. "Nan's very late to-night," said her father. "I've a mind to go and meet her."

"You bide by the fire, John," responded his wife. "Nancy's in a tantrum because I found out as she'd took that bag-money—she'll come in when she's a mind."

"The *bag-money!*" repeated John in a puzzled way. "Nan take it!—she never did, barring you give it her."

"She did then, and bought gloves with it, to do up with six buttons, and there they be now beside you on the settle," retorted Mrs. Forest. John looked in the place his wife had indicated, and there, sure enough, lay the brown kid gloves. This evidence did seem conclusive. John shook his grey head as he held the dainty gloves across his rough palm, and presently said, "You have kept her too short, wife—girls wants their bits of things." He paused and sighed heavily, and then added, "I'll go and look for her."

"It's all your fault, John," broke out his wife as he rose to go. "You as good as told her to do it."

"You ought to have given her some money, Eliza, and you've been nagging at her and driven her out this cold night; if harm comes of it ——" said John as he went out.

"Fiddlesticks about harm; what harm can come to her, I should like to know?" retorted his wife, without allowing him to complete his sentence. Then the door closed and Eliza Forest was alone, with the ticking of the eight-day clock to bear her company.

Slowly the hand of the clock travelled on. A clock is a weird companion—above all, one that strikes the hour after a preliminary groaning sound as this clock did. Mrs. Forest tried to occupy herself with the stocking she was knitting, but she was uneasy and let her work fall in her lap while she reflected to the accompaniment of that metallic "Tick-tick" of the clock. "My mother always said that my temper would get me down and worry me," she meditated; "and I believe it *will* before it's done."

Ten o'clock struck—eleven o'clock, and Mrs. Forest grew really alarmed. She rose and placed her knitting on the high chimney-piece—she generally put it there out of the way of the cat, who played with the ball—and opened the door and peered out into the darkness. There was a sound of footsteps along the frozen high road. She listened intently, but the horses began to move about in the stable close by and she could no longer hear the footsteps.

The cold wind blew right against her, chilling her through and

through. But she still stood there in the doorway. By-and-by there were unmistakable footsteps near at hand. A moment more and John was beside her. He was alone. "Wife," he began in a hollow voice, "Nan left Miss Michin as usual; has she been home?"

"I told you she had," gasped the mother. "I told you she and me had had a tiff about the money."

John Forest made no comment, he was too desperate for that. He knew well enough that if his quiet, patient little Nan had gone away, she must be in a state of mind out of which tragedies come. He would go and rouse Jim Lincoln, who slept in the stable loft, and they would search for her. Mrs. Forest watched her husband disappear in the dim starlight, and then went back to the kitchen. Vague fears took possession of her. She dreaded she knew not what. All her unkindness to Nancy, culminating in last night's blow, seemed to rise up against her. Even as to the taking of the money, Nancy had had her father's sanction and might have thought that enough. But Nancy denied having touched the money; *what if, after all, she had spoken the truth!* She had always been particularly truthful in even the smallest matters. Mrs. Forest would try not to think any more; it was too painful. She would reach down her knitting and try to "do" a bit.

She rose and took down the half-knit stocking, but the spare needle was missing. She felt with her hand upon the chimney-piece, but could not find it. Then she mounted a chair and searched. It was nowhere to be seen. "It may have slipped into the nick at the back," she thought, and she got a skewer and poked it into the narrow groove. Out fell the needle—and something else which made a clinking sound as it fell upon the brick floor. She stooped to see what it was, *and there glittering in the firelight lay the missing half-sovereign.*

When Fred Hurst had seen Messrs. Hermann and Scheiner, he was in the highest possible spirits: a whole future seemed to open out before him.

It may appear that Fred was conceited, and "too sure;" but we must record that he went to a jeweller's and bought a little pearl ring for Nancy, meaning to place it on her third finger next day when her lips should have given him the promise he knew her heart had long since given. Having made his purchase he took train from Liverpool Street to Exboro', from which place he would have to walk to Shenton, where he could not arrive until one o'clock in the morning. He had performed some miles of his walk across the hills, and was within an appreciable distance of Braley Brook, when he observed a dark figure crouching on a fallen tree. He was at first a little startled, for it was most unusual to meet anyone in this place, above all at such an hour: it was after midnight. On coming nearer he saw that the figure was that of a woman. It might be one

of the cottagers from Shenton—who had been to Exboro' and been taken ill on the way home—he would see.

He came close and touched the crouching figure, and asked gently, "Are you ill? Can I do anything for you?"

The figure started violently and looked up at him, and in the starlight he recognised the face of Nancy Forest.

In a moment he was seated on the fallen tree beside her, and had placed his arm about her. "Nancy, dearest Nancy," he cried, pressing burning kisses on her cold cheek — the first he had ever given her. "Nancy, speak to me; tell me what is the meaning of your being here."

But she could not answer him then; she simply laid her cheek against his shoulder and wept bitterly. But she did tell him all presently; and he told her what he had long since wished to tell, and they walked together to the old farm, for, of course, Nancy must return to her parents for a little time—only a very little time, they decided. When they reached the farm, John Forest and his wife were standing by the round table in the house-place, where the half-sovereign lay. John was hard and relentless; his wife was sobbing aloud. And then the door opened, and Nancy and Fred stood before them.

With a wild cry, Eliza Forest clasped her daughter to her heart, imploring her forgiveness. "My temper 'welly' worried me this time, Nancy," she said; "but after this I will worry *it*."

So here the story properly ends, for Mr. Hurst, to the surprise of everyone, yielded a ready consent to the marriage, and even offered an allowance to the young couple and one of his small farms to live in. Miss Sabina allowed her old interest in Nancy to revive, and sent her the material for her wedding dress, which Miss Michin announced her intention of making up herself—every stitch. Nor was this all. Mrs. Dodd, the worthy post-mistress, with whom Nancy had always been a favourite, begged her acceptance of a prettily-furnished work-basket which she had made a journey to Exboro' to buy.

And the half-sovereign?

It was never spent, but was always in sight under a wine-glass, to remind the owner—so she said—"of how her temper nearly worried her."

JEANIE GWYNNE BETTANY.

PAUL.

By the Author of "Adonais, Q.C."

IT was a great surprise and disappointment to me when Janet, the only child of my brother, Duncan Wright, wrote announcing her engagement to the Honourable Stephen Vandeleur.

I had always thought she would marry Paul. Paul was the only surviving son—four others had died—of my dead brother Alexander, and had made one of Duncan's household from his boyhood. I had always loved Janet—and Paul was as the apple of my eye. When the two were mere children, and Duncan was still in comparatively humble circumstances, living in a semi-detached villa in the suburbs of Glasgow, I kept my brother's house for some years, he being then a widower.

I cannot say I altogether liked doing so. Having independent means of my own, I did not require to fill such a position, and I had never got on very well with Duncan. However, I dearly loved the children, although I had enough to do with them, too. Janet was one of the prettiest, merriest, laughing little creatures—with eyes the colour of the sea in summer-time, and a complexion like a wild-rose—the sun ever shed its light upon; but she had a most distressing way of tearing her frocks and of never looking tidy, which Duncan seemed to think entirely my fault; and as for Paul, he certainly was a most awful boy.

He was fair as Janet, though with a differently-shaped face; rather a long face, with a square, determined-looking chin; and, besides being one of the handsomest, was assuredly one of the cleverest boys I ever knew. He had a good, sound, strong Scotch intellect, and was as sharp as a needle, or any Yankee, into the bargain.

But he *would* have his own way, whatever it was, and was often mischievous as a fiend incarnate; and in his contradictory moods, would have gone on saying black was white all day on the chance of getting somebody to argue with him. Duncan paid no attention whatever to the lad, except, from time to time, to speculate what particular bad end he would come to.

But I loved Paul, and Paul loved me—and adored Janet.

The boy had one exceedingly beautiful feature in his face: sometimes I could not take my eyes from it; I used to wonder if it could be that which made me love him so much—his mouth. I have never seen another anything like it. The steady, strong, and yet delicate lips—so calm and serious when still, as to make one feel at rest merely to look at them; but when in motion extraordinarily sensitive, quivering, curving, and curling in sympathy with every thought.

I loved both children; but perhaps the reason that made me love

Paul most was—that whilst I knew Janet's nature, out and in, to the core of her very loving little heart, Paul's often puzzled me.

There was not much in the way of landscape to be seen from that villa in the suburbs of Glasgow; but we did catch just one glimpse of sky which was not always obscured by smoke, and I have seen Paul, lost in thought, looking up at this patch of blue, with an expression on his face—at once sweet and sorrowful—so strange in one so young, that it made me instinctively move more quietly, not to disturb him, and set me wondering.

However, what with one thing and another, I was not by any means heart-broken when Duncan married again—one of the kindest women in the world; I can't think what she saw in him—and thus released me.

So the years flew on—and the wheel of fortune gave some strange turns for Duncan. By a series of wonderfully successful speculations he rapidly amassed a huge fortune.

They left Glasgow then, and built a colossal white brick mansion not far from London.

When Janet was eighteen and Paul twenty-one, I paid them a visit there. Except that Janet was now grown up, she was just the same—with her thriftless, thoughtless ways, and her laughing baby face, and her yellow head—a silly little head enough, perhaps, but a dear, dear little head to me.

She had the same admiration, almost awe, of the splendours of this world in any form; the same love of fine clothes—with the same carelessness as to how she used them. It gave me a good laugh, the first afternoon I was there, to see her come in with a new dress all soiled and torn by a holly-bush she had pushed her way through on the lawn. It made me think of the time when she had gone popping in and out to the little back garden at Glasgow, and singing and swinging about the stairs—a bonnie wee lassie with a dirty pink cotton gown, and, as often as not, dirtier face.

Paul seemed to me, in looks at least, to have more than fulfilled the promise of his boyhood. A handsomer, more self-reliant-looking young fellow I had never seen; and I was not long in the house before I observed—with secret tears of amusement—that it was not only in looks he remained unchanged. The same dictatorialness and sharp tongue; the same thinly-veiled insolence to Duncan; the same swift smiles from his entrancing lips—thank Heaven undisfigured by any moustache—to myself; the same unalterable gentleness to Janet. His invariable courtesy to Duncan's wife made me very happy. It was as I said: there was much good in the boy.

Paul had a little money of his own to begin with, and I did think Duncan, with his fortune, might have sent an exceptionally clever lad like that to one of the Universities, and made something of him afterwards—a lawyer, say; but instead of that, Paul was put into business in London, and, I was glad to hear, was doing very well.

As for Duncan's hideous white brick castle, with its paltry half-dozen acres, entered by lodges of the utmost pretension, and his coach-houses full of flashy carriages, with the family coat-of-arms (!) upon each, I thought the whole place one of the most contemptible patches of snobbery on this fair earth ; and I was glad my father's toil-bleared eyes were hid in the grave, so that they should not have the shame of resting upon it.

In spite of what I thought, however, I did my best to keep a solemn face at Paul's smart speeches, which were often amusing, and often simply impudence.

Duncan, as of yore, went as though he saw him not.

I had not been at Duncan's palace long before I came to the conclusion that there was some private understanding betwixt the two young people ; and, at last, just before I left, my suspicions were confirmed.

Hastily pushing open the library door, which stood ajar, I saw Paul with his back to me, at the end of the room, looking into the conservatory. He had evidently just entered from the garden. "Janet," he called, in a voice the import of which there could be no mistaking ; and with a rush, I heard several pots crash ; Janet, who had no doubt happened to have her head turned the other way, sprang into view, and threw herself into his arms.

I quietly withdrew, and went away very, very happy. I knew Paul had a promise of a first-rate appointment abroad, by-and-by ; and supposing I should hear more of this before long, I went placidly away home to the far north. Instead of that, in six months or so, Janet wrote announcing her engagement to the Honourable Stephen Vandeleur.

Of course I went south for Janet's wedding.

If I had thought she was being forced into this marriage (Duncan was snob enough) I should not have gone a step, but should have done my best to prevent it ; but I could not think that from the tone of the letter ; and Paul wrote as well all about it. I could but think I had been mistaken ; that there had been no serious engagement between them, but only a flirtation, as they might call it, or something of that sort : a very reprehensible flirtation, with my Puritanical notions, it seemed to me. I need not say I was greatly disappointed.

So in due course south I went.

Paul met me—handsomer and more dictatorial than ever ; his blue eyes clear and piercing as before. He seemed quite pleased ; said Stephen Vandeleur was a good fellow ; was most impertinently sarcastic about Duncan's aristocratic guests ; and altogether appeared in good spirits. Janet I did not think looking well. She seemed very nervous, and made the remark that she wished it were six months ago ; but of course it was natural a girl should be a little hysterical on the eve of her wedding-day.

The morrow came, and the wedding with it. I thought it a very

unpleasant one. Whatever might be Stèphen Vandeleur's own feelings, he seemed, as Paul said, a very good fellow. It was evident his friends only countenanced it on consideration of the huge dowry Janet brought with her. Some of them were gentlepeople, as I understand the word, and some were not; but Duncan, who appeared really to think the mere accident of superior birth in itself a guarantee of personal merit, as Paul very truly put it, grovelled all round, until I was sick with shame. Paul, however, was at his best and wittiest and brightest, and kept everybody in tolerably good humour.

When the carriage came to take the bride and bridegroom away, I remembered some trifle of Janet's that had been left in the conservatory; and, as I was in the hall at the time, ran hastily outside and round by the gravel to the door opening from the lawn, which was my shortest way to the conservatory from there.

Suddenly I stood quite still. Paul was looking out of the library window, and Janet, ready for departure, came falteringly in and stood behind him. He did not look towards her. "Paul!" she whispered entreatingly; and although so low there was the utmost anguish in the tone: "Paul." As though not knowing what she did, she raised her arm, standing behind him there, as if to shake hands. Abruptly he wheeled round, with a face down which the great tears coursed, but awful in its pallor and sternness; and, taking no notice of her outstretched hand, pointed to the door. Weeping bitterly, she swiftly turned and went.

I cannot describe the shock this terrible scene gave me. It did not take half-a-dozen short moments to enact, but it represented, unmistakably, the blasting of two lives—the lives of those dearest in all the world to me.

I do not know, I never knew, whether Paul saw me. I think I must have become momentarily unconscious, and when I came to myself he was gone.

I sat where I was, weeping bitter tears—bitter as Janet's—and thought of the little lassie in the dirty pink frock that had sung and swung about the stairs, and of the boy who had stood day-dreaming, looking up into the blue sky. Sometimes I was wildly angry. Whose fault was it? Who was answerable for this? If it was the young people's own fault, someone ought to have looked after them better, ought to have prevented it. No one, not even I, could help them now, that was the bitterest, bitterest part of it; no one and nothing—save time, or death.

I wished that day I had never left my children.

II.

I MUST pass over a long period now—I suppose I should have said I was writing of a great many years ago, and come to the time, twenty years later, when Paul came home from abroad. He had not been home all these years, and neither had I been once in the south.

Janet, my poor Janet, was long since dead. She had died before she was quite two years married. It was an additional pang to my grief that I had never said good-bye to her at all; but no good-bye was better than that awful one I had witnessed of Paul.

What was the precise explanation of it I never knew. It was easy to divine that Janet had indeed been engaged to marry Paul, and had given him up; but whether this was the result of some quarrel, or whether she had deliberately done it, dazzled by the prospect of a union with an earl's son, I cannot say. Anyhow, I am sure she quickly regretted her determination. I am certain she loved only Paul. But the word had been spoken, and whatever Vandeleur may have been, Paul was not a man to give any woman a chance of trifling with him twice. So my poor Janet had to reap what her folly had sown, as best she might.

Janet left one little child, a daughter, called Janet, after her; and this child, becoming an orphan at an early age by the death, next, of Stephen Vandeleur, was brought up with his family in Ireland.

She was in Scotland once when she was about fourteen, and I saw her, and was not favourably impressed. She was quiet and prim and proper, as cold as an icicle: a very pretty little girl, I owned that; but then I had thought to find something of *my* Janet, and was disappointed. Her eyes were indeed blue, but looked one in the face calmly as though they had belonged to a woman of forty; and her hair and long eye-lashes were as dark as night. She had just this of my Janet, her pink and snow wild-rose complexion. She seemed to me, in all else, a Vandeleur to her finger-tips.

She occasionally paid Duncan long visits; and as she grew up, I heard that Duncan tried to make these visits as frequent and as lengthy as possible. She was immensely admired, it seemed, and Duncan liked her to stay with him because of the people she attracted to his house. I was sure this was true. It was so like one of Duncan's horrid ways. He still lived in that white brick edifice, and was richer then ever. A good deal of gossip drifted to me, in the far north as I was. I was told that Janet had a Manchester millionaire, an American railway king, and a real live lord, all madly in love with her—and she not yet quite nineteen!

Just then Paul returned home, and Duncan wrote inviting me to come down and see them. Paul was to stay with them—and Duncan was quite proud about it. His predictions had turned out all wrong; for Paul had come home a personage of importance, and a very rich man indeed. I was almost sorry that Janet's child happened to be at Duncan's just then, thinking her presence would revive old memories better forgotten. And then, if Paul were at all like what he used to be, I was sure her calmly superior, supercilious little ways would irritate him intensely. I had never seen her at Duncan's, but I could fancy how she would look there.

When I saw Paul, just for the first minute or so I felt quite

startled. He seemed so marvellously little changed. He was forty-one, and would have looked young for thirty. Of course by-and-by I saw there were lines in his face which had not before been there. I could not say, not talking of appearance but of character, that I thought him improved. He no longer spoke scornfully to or of Duncan, but was always coldly courteous; yet often I would see a sneer on his curving lips that was more biting and bitter than any words, and made them look evil. He was not dictatorial all round to everybody as he used to be, but I thought him harsh in particular instances. His smiles to myself were more rare; his eyes colder: he seemed to me cynical of all on earth; I feared, too, with keen sorrow, of all in Heaven.

Others spoke of the changes the wear and tear of life abroad had made on Paul, but I had seen his face as it looked—for the last time on earth—upon Janet that day, and had my own sad thoughts.

But although I speak of these changes, I do not mean to say that Paul was not as gentle and loving to me as he had ever been, and that I was not exquisitely happy to be with him again. Many a pleasant walk had we about Duncan's garden, I leaning on Paul's strong arm, a support which I felt the need of now. Twenty years had not come and gone without leaving plenty of traces on me. We neither of us ever mentioned Janet, *my* Janet, that is to say. Janet's daughter (Janet II., as I used to mentally designate her for convenience' sake) was here as I expected, and for a while, just as before, I did not take to her. I left her alone and she left me alone; that was her way.

She was lovely, certainly; ethereally lovely; almost too lovely for one's senses to grasp the fact that she was but common flesh and blood like all the rest of the world: a poem in human form if there ever was one. Gossip had spoken truly for once; there were the three distinguished lovers, and goodness knows how many more besides.

Paul and I never spoke of this girl, any more than we did of my Janet; but, at first, I often fancied I saw his gaze fastened on her; the same unpleasant sneer on his lips which disfigured them when he looked at Duncan. By and by I grew rather to like her. I believe I, at heart, resented Paul looking like that at my Janet's bairn. I began to fancy that, for all her apparent calmness, she was shy. If we met in the garden she would give me a swift glance to see if I were going to stop and speak to her, and, I thought, seemed pleased when I did. At last there came an odd little episode.

Paul was very fond of animals—that was always one of his good traits—and he one day found a little stray white kitten somewhere about the place, and brought it into the room where I sat alone at work. He began grimly to play with it. Just then Janet opened the door. She gave a delighted exclamation, and, coming eagerly forward, smilingly held out her arms for the kitten. She was dressed

for the evening, and the little thing began clawing about her lovely gown, and in one instant had pulled to shreds a very expensive bit of trimming.

I started up in distress; but Janet, putting the kitten gently back on the table, burst into laughter. I am very sure I had never heard Janet laugh before, and I don't think Paul ever had. A prettier, happier, more silvery little peal could not be imagined; but it was not so much that which struck home to my heart as the fact that if I had shut my eyes I could have thought *my* Janet stood in the room. The girl had her mother's laugh.

I returned hastily to my work, and did not dare to lift my head until Janet was gone—then I looked stealthily at Paul.

The sun was just setting—the sky a rolling roseate glory from end to end. Paul—my Paul—my Paul, with the old beautiful light in his face, stood, with arms crossed, looking up into it. All at once something came into my throat which almost stifled me, so that I could not have sat where I was for any consideration whatever. I slipped quietly away and left him.

From this day I loved the girl. Whether it was her carelessness about the dress—so like her mother—or the laugh—or what—I loved her now almost as much as I had loved her mother.

It seemed to me that from this day, too, Paul became more like his old self: a very much toned-down and softened old self; no longer so much the hard, cynical Paul of later years as the boyish Paul of old. Of course, no sooner had my feelings changed in this way than I became greatly interested in Janet's lovers. I thought the cotton millionaire vulgar; and the American railway king I could not make this or that of; but the lord seemed a very nice, simple-mannered young man; so that I hoped—for although I am a bit of a Radical, I lay claim to having some common-sense too—if it were to be one of these three, it would be he.

But the calm indifference with which this slip of a girl treated three such lovers was truly appalling. I can't think how they stood it: I shouldn't.

I cannot remember exactly when it was that I made a discovery. Opposite to the library, of which I have already spoken, now a venerable old room, was my bed-room; and there was no other room until you had gone along a passage and crossed a hall. It was my custom to go to bed very early, and I did so here at Duncan's, long before the rest of the household. I suppose they thought I went fair off to sleep, too; for this part of the house was always deserted after I had gone into my room.

It was thus I made the discovery that every night, before retiring herself, Janet came to the library and stayed a few minutes; and I could hear her sometimes moving about books on the table.

For a considerable time I felt hopelessly puzzled. All at once it struck me—girls are the same all over the world and in all ages—

that she must come there to look at the photograph of someone she cared for; to say good-night to it; perhaps to murmur a prayer over it. Girls are made so. Doubtless she would take it away with her altogether to some place more convenient for such oblations but that Duncan was much in the library, and had lynx-eyes.

I grew troubled, these nocturnal visits continuing, and wished that I could help her. I thought if I could only find out whose the photograph was, perhaps I might.

One night I could bear it no longer. I am aware that I must seem a most prying old woman; but somehow or other this library was fated to be mixed up with my life. I rose and just peeped round the library door to see what she was doing. She was standing in the clear moonlight—not, as I had expected, with an open photograph album, but holding a little miniature, taken from its place on the table. I went back to bed, my heart bounding. I knew now! I did not sleep much that night.

Perhaps I acted rashly—but I thought I should apply to Paul for help. I was sure, from various signs, that he did not hate my Janet's bairn now. I told him of these stolen visits to the library, and tried to persuade him to conceal himself and watch there—for the purpose of finding out whose the portrait was. I did not tell him, deceitful woman that I was, that I myself already knew. Old people like him and me, I said, should help the child out of her trouble. I must have startled him terribly: he grew, at first, so white. Then he looked at me long and intently; and by-and-by began to cross-examine me. We were canny Scots, both of us, and fenced.

"You say it was a photograph you saw her with?"

"I did not say I saw her."

"You have heard her open an album?"

"I have heard her move books."

I have seen the time when I could have broken a lance with the best; but I was growing old, and he finished by getting me into rather a hobble—when he abruptly left me, a great flush sweeping over his face. He came back by-and-by, and took me out into the garden. If he never had been the real old Paul before—he was so now. He cut the pansies from my best cap, and decorated Duncan's coat-of-arms—which had broken out about the walls now-a-days—with them. But he might have cut the cap in two for all I cared just then.

That night—I hoped he had not forgotten—I hoped he would come. Presently I heard a quiet step which I knew to be his. Then I sat down and listened again. Swish, swish—here she was at last. I had listened too often to the soft rustle of her trailing gown to make any mistake now. In my excitement—you see I was an old habitué at prying and peering about the library by this time—I put one eye round the door, at her very back. She had gone a few steps

nto the room—and now stood, rooted to the spot, startled. There, vith his face—and all that he would have it say—fair and bright in he moonlight, stood Paul. He opened his arms.

"Janet," he said.

With a little cry, and a sob, the girl rushed into them.

I went away back to my own room. I am sure it is superfluous o explain my little plot: that it was not a photograph, but an old niniature of Paul I had seen Janet with—an old miniature which I ad painted on ivory myself in the far-distant days. I am sure 'aul never had a photograph taken. Of course it was because had recognised this that I wanted Paul to wait in the library; but e was a better fencer than I, and made me admit more than I ntended. I sat down now, a world of old memories whirling rough my brain. I mixed this that I had just seen—with something ery like it in the long, long past—with the crash of pots, and nother figure that had thrown itself into Paul's arms. There was e old room: *Janet* had been said there, too; and the lips through nich the word had trembled were the same: and the voice was the me also. Only the figure that had darted forward—was different. I did not go to bed at all that night; but sat looking out over e quiet, moon-lit garden and over the fields beyond, where the corn- ake was calling, calling; the river slipping like a silver thread at e far-away end of them; and patter, patter out and into the back- rden at Glasgow went the little feet again; and to and fro ran the r-haired little lassie in the dirty pink cotton, tugging me this way d that by the hand; and such a singing and swinging went on out the stairs. Oh, how I wondered whether Paul would ever tell net her mother's story.

I was not going placidly away north *this* time, to wait to hear more out anything by-and-by. I did not leave that factory-like erection Duncan's until I had seen them married.

THE CHURCH GARDEN.

"We cannot," said the people, "stand these children,
Always round us with their racketing and play;
Yon Church-garden set right down among our houses
Is really quite a nuisance in its way!

"True, their homes are very dull, and bare, and dismal,
And the narrow courts they live in dark and small,
And we think they love that sparsely-planted acre—
But we do not want to think of them at all!

"There are surely parks enough to make a play-ground,
And we might be spared these noisy little feet;
But the parks, the Clergy say, are all too distant,
And so they planned this garden in the street!

"No doubt the seats are pleasanter that curb-stones,
While the trees make quite a shelter from the sun,
And the grass does nicely for the crawling babies—
But somebody must think of Number One!

"And the air the children get of course is purer;
But then the noise they make is very great,
With their laughter and their shouting to each other,
And the everlasting banging of the gate!

"And the wailing of the sickly, puny babies
Is enough to fret one's spirit through and through—
No doubt they cry as much in those dark alleys—
But then we never hear them if they do!

"Half the Parish talks to us of self-denial,
Of kindly duties lying at the door,
And of One who says the Poor are always with us;
But we can't be always thinking of the Poor!

"We are older, we are richer, we are wiser;
Why should we be vexed and troubled in our ease?
Just because the children like the Vicar's garden,
With its faded grass and smoky London trees!

"Still we feel sometimes a little self-convicted,
When we hear the hard-worked kindly Clergy say
That it helps them often in their weary labours,
Just to see the children happy at their play!

"Yet we think they try to make the thing too solemn,
When they put aside our protests with the plea:
'Whatsoe'er ye did to such as these, my brethren,
To the least—ye did it even unto Me.'"

Thus the people murmured, but the children's Angels
Smiled rejoicing, and a richer blessing falls
On the Church that made a shelter for the children
Underneath the holy shadow of her walls.

CHRISTIAN BURKE

M. L. GOW. R. TAYL

HE PUT HIS HAND TO HIS SIDE, AND MOTIONED MIRPAH TO OPEN THE LETTE

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1891.

THE FATE OF THE HARA DIAMOND.

CHAPTER XXII.

MR. MADGIN AT THE HELM.

MR. MADGIN'S house stood somewhat back from the main street of Eastbury. It was an old-fashioned house, of modest exterior, and had an air of being elbowed into the background by the smarter and more modern domiciles on each side of it. Its steep, overhanging roof and porched doorway gave it a sleepy, reposeful look, as though it were watching the on-goings of the little town through half-closed lids, and taking small cognizance thereof.

Entering from the street through a little wooden gateway of a bright green colour, a narrow pathway, paved with round pebbles that were very trying to people with tender feet, conducted you to the front door, on which shone a brass plate of surpassing brightness, whereon was inscribed :—

> MR. SOLOMON MADGIN.
> *General Agent,*
> *Valuer, &c.*

The house was a double-fronted one. On one side of the passage as you went in was the office; on the other side was the family sitting-room. Not that Mr. Madgin's family was a large one. It consisted merely of himself, his daughter Mirpah, and one strong servant-girl with an unlimited capacity for hard work. Mirpah Madgin deserves some notice at our hands.

She was a tall, superb-looking young woman of two-and-twenty, and bore not the slightest resemblance in person, whatever she might do in mind or disposition, to that sly old fox her father. Mirpah's mother had been of Jewish extraction, and in Mirpah's face you read

the unmistakable signs of that grand style of beauty which is everywhere associated with the downtrodden race. She moved about the little house in her inexpensive prints and muslins like a discrowned queen. That she had reached the age of two-and-twenty without having been in love was no source of surprise to those who knew her; for Mirpah Madgin hardly looked like a girl who would marry a poor clerk or a petty tradesman, or who could ever sink into the commonplace drudge of a hand-to-mouth household. She looked like a girl who would some day be claimed by a veritable hero of romance—by some Ivanhoe of modern life, well endowed with this world's goods—who would wed her, and ride away with her to the fairy realms of Tyburnia and Rotten Row.

And yet, truth to tell, the thread of romance inwoven with the composition of Mirpah Madgin was a very slender one. In so far she belied her own beauty. For a young woman she was strangely practical, and that in a curiously unfeminine way. She was her father's managing clerk and *alter ego*. The housewifely acts of sewing and cooking she held in utter distaste. For domestic management in any of its forms she had no faculty, unless it were for that portion of it which necessitated a watchful eye upon the purse-strings. Such an eye she had been trained to use since she was quite a girl, and Mirpah the superb could on occasion haggle over a penny as keenly as the most ancient fishwife in Eastbury market.

At five minutes past nine precisely, six mornings out of every seven, Mirpah Madgin sat down in her father's office and proceeded to open the letters. Mr. Madgin's business was a multifarious one. Not only was he Lady Chillington's general agent and man of business, although that was his most onerous and lucrative appointment, and the one that engaged most of his time and thoughts, but he was also agent for several lesser concerns, always contriving to have a number of small irons in the fire at one time. Much of Mr. Madgin's time was spent in the collection of rents and in out-door work generally, so that nearly the whole of the office duties devolved upon Mirpah, and by no clerk could they have been more efficiently performed. She made up and balanced the numerous accounts with which Mr. Madgin had to deal in one shape or another. Three-fourths of the letters that emanated from Mr. Madgin's office were written by her. From long practice she had learned to write so like her father that only an expert could have detected the difference between the two hands; and she invariably signed herself, "Yours truly, Solomon Madgin." Indeed, so accustomed was she to writing her father's name that in her correspondence with her brother, who was an actor in London, she more frequently than not signed it in place of her own; so that Madgin junior had to look whether the letter was addressed to him as a son or as a brother before he could tell by whom it had been written.

As her father's assistant Mirpah was happy after a quiet, staid sort

of fashion. The energies of her nature found their vent in the busy life in which she took so much delight. She was not at all sentimental: she was not the least bit romantic. She was thoroughly practical, and was as keen in money-making as her father himself. Yet with all this, Mirpah Madgin could be charitable on occasion, and was by no means deficient of high and generous impulses—only she never allowed her impulses to interfere with "business."

Mr. Madgin never took any important step without first consulting his daughter. Herein he acted wisely, for Mirpah's clear, good sense, and feminine quickness at penetrating motives where he himself was sometimes at fault, had often proved invaluable to him in difficult transactions. In a matter of so much moment as that of the Great Hara Diamond it was not likely that he would be long contented without taking her into his confidence. He had scarcely finished his first pipe when he heard her opening the door with her latch-key, and his face brightened at the sound. She had been on one of those holy pilgrimages in which all who are thus privileged take so much delight: she had been to the bank to increase the little store which lay there already in her father's name. She came into the room tired but smiling. A white straw bonnet, a black silk mantle, and a muslin dress, small in pattern, formed the chief items of her quiet attire. She was carefully gloved and booted; but to whatever she wore Mirpah imparted an air of distinction that put it at once beyond a suggestion of improvement.

"Smoking at this time of day, papa!" exclaimed Mirpah. "And the whisky out, too! Are we about to retire on our fortunes, or what does it all mean?"

"It means, child, that I have got one of the hardest nuts to crack that were ever put before me. If I crack it, I get five thousand pounds for the kernel. If I don't crack it—but that's a possibility I can't bear to think about."

"Five thousand pounds! That would indeed be a kernel worth having. My teeth are younger than yours, and perhaps I may be able to help you."

Mr. Madgin smoked in silence for a little while, while Mirpah toyed patiently with her bonnet strings. "The nut is simply this," said the old man at last. "In India, twenty years ago, a diamond was stolen from a dying man. I am now told to find the thief, to obtain from him the diamond either by fair means or foul—supposing always that he is still alive and has the diamond still in his possession—and on the day I give the stone to its rightful owner the aforementioned five thousand pounds become mine."

"A grand prize, and one worth striving for!"

"Even so; but how can I strive, when I have nothing to strive against? I am like a man put into a dark room to fight a duel. I cannot find my antagonist. I grope about, not knowing whether he is on the right hand of me or the left, before me or behind me. In

fact, I am utterly at sea; and the more I think about the matter the more hopelessly bewildered I seem to become."

"Two heads are better than one, papa. Let me try to help you. Tell me the case from beginning to end, with all the details as they are known to you."

Mr. Madgin willingly complied, and related *in extenso* all that he had heard that morning at Deepley Walls. The little man had a high opinion of his daughter's sagacity. That such an opinion was in nowise lessened by the result of the present case will be best seen by the following excerpts from Mr. Madgin's diary, which, as having a particular bearing on the case of the Great Hara Diamond, we proceed at once to lay before the reader :—

Excerpts from the Diary of Mr. Solomon Madgin.

"July 9th, Evening.—After the wonderful revelation made to me by Lady Chillington this morning, I came home, and got behind a churchwarden, and set my wits to work to think the matter out. I shut my eyes and puffed away for an hour and a half, but at the end of that time I was as much in a fog as when I first sat down. Nowhere could I discern a single ray of light. Then in came Mirpah, and when she begged of me to tell her the story, I was glad to do so, remembering how often she had helped me through a puzzle in days gone by—but none of them of such magnitude as this one. So I told her everything as far as it was known to myself. After that we discussed the whole case carefully step by step. The immediate result of this discussion was, that as soon as tea was over, I went as far as the White Hart tavern in search of Sergeant Nicholas. I found him on the bowling-green, watching the players. I called for a quart of old ale and some tobacco, and before long we were as cosy as two old cronies who have known each other for twenty years. The morning had shown me that the Sergeant was a man of some intelligence, and of much worldly experience; and when I had lowered myself imperceptibly to the level of his intellect, so as to put him more completely at his ease, I had no difficulty in inducing him to talk freely and fully on that one subject which, for the last few hours, has had for me an interest paramount to that of any other. My primary object was to induce him to retail to me every scrap of information that he could call to mind respecting the Russian, Platzoff, who is said to have stolen the diamond. It was Mirpah's opinion and mine, that he must be in possession of many bits of special knowledge, such as might seem of no consequence to him, but which might be invaluable to us in our search, and such as he would naturally leave out of the narrative he told Lady Chillington. The result proved that our opinion was well founded. I did not leave the Sergeant till I had pumped him thoroughly dry. (Mem.: An

excellent tap of old ale at the White Hart. Must try some of it at home.)

"I found Mirpah watering her geraniums in the back garden. She was all impatience to learn the result of my interview. I am thankful that increasing years have not impaired my memory. I repeated to Mirpah every word bearing on the case in point that the Sergeant had confided to me. Then I waited in silence for her opinion. I was anxious to know whether it coincided in any way with my own. I am happy to think that it did coincide. Father and daughter were agreed.

"'I think that you have done a very good afternoon's work, papa,' said Mirpah, after a few moments given to silent thought. 'After a lapse of twenty years, it is not likely that Sergeant Nicholas should have a very clear recollection of any conversation that he may have overheard between Captain Chillington and M. Platzoff. Indeed, had he pretended to repeat any such conversation, I should have felt strongly inclined to doubt the truth of his entire narrative. Happily he disclaims any such abnormal powers of memory. He can remember nothing but a chance phrase or two which some secondary circumstance fixed indelibly on his mind. But he can remember a great number of little facts bearing on the relations between his master and the Russian. These facts, considered singly, may seem of little or no importance, but taken in the aggregate, and regarded as so many bits of mosaic work forming part of a complicated whole, they assume an aspect of far greater importance. In any case, they put us on a trail, which may turn out to be the right one or the wrong one, but at present certainly seems to be worth following up. Finally, they all tend to deepen our first suspicion that M. Platzoff was neither more nor less than a political refugee. The next point is to ascertain whether he is still alive.'

"Here again the clear logical intellect of Mirpah (so like my own) came to my assistance. Before parting for the night we were agreed as to what our mode of procedure ought to be on the morrow. This most extraordinary case engages all my thoughts. I am afraid that I shall not be able to sleep much to-night.

"July 10th.—I owe it to Mirpah to say that it was entirely in consequence of a hint from her that I went at an early hour this morning to the office of the *Eastbury Courier*, there to consult a file of that newspaper. Six months ago the daughter of Sir John Pennythorne was married to a rich London gentleman. Mirpah had read the account of the festivities consequent on that event, and seemed to remember that among other friends of the bridegroom invited down to Finch Hall was some foreign gentleman, who was stated in the newspaper to belong to the Russian Legation in London. Acting on Mirpah's hint, I went back through the files of the *Courier* till I hunted on the account of the wedding. True enough, among other guests on that occasion, I found catalogued the name of a certain

Monsieur H—— of the Russian Embassy. I had got all I wanted from the *Eastbury Courier*.

"My next proceeding was to hasten up to Deepley Walls, to obtain an interview with Lady Chillington, and to induce her ladyship to write to Sir John Pennythorne, asking him to write to the aforesaid M. H——, and inquire whether, among the archives (I think that is the correct word) of the Embassy, they had any record of a political refugee by name Paul Platzoff, who, twenty years ago, was in India, etc. I had considerable difficulty in persuading her ladyship to write, but at last the letter was sent. I await the result anxiously. The chances seem to me something like a thousand to one against our inquiry being productive of any tangible result. What I dread more than all is that M. Platzoff is no longer among the living.

"July 20th.—Nine days without a word from Sir John Pennythorne, except to say that he had written his friend Monsieur H——, as requested by Lady Chillington. I began to despair. Each morning I inquired of her ladyship whether she had received any reply from Sir John, and each morning her ladyship said: 'I have had no reply, Mr. Madgin, beyond the one you have already seen.'

"Certain matters connected with a lease took me up to Deepley Walls this afternoon for the second time to-day. The afternoon post came in while I was there. Among other letters was one from Sir John Pennythorne, which, when she had read it, her ladyship tossed over to me. It enclosed one from M. H—— to Sir John. It was on the latter that I pounced. It was written in French, but even at the first hasty reading I could make it out sufficiently to know that it was of far greater importance than even in my wildest dreams I had dared to imagine.

"I never saw Lady Chillington so excited as she was during the few moments which I took up in reading the letter. During the nine days that had elapsed since the writing of her letter to Sir John she had treated me somewhat slightingly; there was, or so I fancied, a spice of contempt in her manner towards me. The step I had induced her to take in writing to Sir John had met with no approbation at her hands; it had seemed to her an utterly futile and ridiculous thing to do; therefore was I now proportionately well pleased to find that my wild idea had been productive of such excellent fruit.

"'I must certainly compliment you, Mr. Madgin, on the success of your first step,' said her ladyship. 'It was like one of the fine intuitions of genius to imagine that you saw a way to reach M. Platzoff through the Russian Embassy. You have been fully justified by the result. Madgin, the man yet lives!—the man whose sacrilegious hands robbed my dead son of that which he had left as a sacred gift to his mother. May the curse of a widowed mother attend him through life! Let me hear the letter again, Madgin; or

stay, I will read it myself: your French is execrable. Ha, ha! Monsieur Paul Platzoff, we shall have our revenge out of you yet.'

"She read the letter through for the second time with a sort of deliberate eagerness which showed me how deeply interested her heart was in the affair. She dropped her eye-glass and gave a great sigh when she came to the end of it. 'And what do you propose to do next, Mr. Madgin?' she asked. 'Your conduct so far satisfies me that I cannot do better than leave the case entirely in your hands.'

"'With all due deference to your ladyship,' I replied, 'I think that my next step ought to be to reconnoitre the enemy's camp.'

"'Exactly my own thought,' said her ladyship. 'When can you start for Windermere?'

"'To-morrow morning, at nine.'

"After a little more conversation I left her ladyship. She seemed in better spirits than I had seen her for a long time.

"I need not attempt to describe dear Mirpah's delight when I read over to her the contents of Monsieur H.'s note. She put her arms round me and kissed me. 'The five thousand pounds shall yet be yours, papa,' she said. Stranger things than that have come to pass before now. But I am working only for her and James. Should I ever be so fortunate as to touch the five thousand pounds, one-half of it will go to form a dowry for my Mirpah. Below is a free translation of the business part of M. H.'s letter, which was simply an extract from some secret ledger kept at the Embassy:—

"'Platzoff, Paul. A Russian by birth and a conspirator by choice. Born in Moscow in 1802, his father being a rich leather-merchant of that city. Implicated at the age of nineteen in sundry insurrectionary movements; tried, and sentenced to three years' imprisonment in a military fortress. After his release, left Russia without permission, having first secretly transferred his property into foreign securities. Went to Paris. Issued a scurrilous pamphlet directed against his Majesty the Emperor. Spent several years in travel—now in Europe, now in the East, striving wherever he went to promulgate his revolutionary ideas. More than suspected of being a member of several secret political societies. Has resided for the last few years at Bon Repos, on the banks of Windermere, from which place he communicates constantly with other characters as desperate as himself. Russia has no more bitter and determined enemy than Paul Platzoff. He is at once clever and unscrupulous. While he lives he will not cease to conspire.'

"After this followed a description of Platzoff's personal appearance, which it is needless to transcribe here.

"I start for Windermere by the first train to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXIII.

MR. MADGIN'S SECRET JOURNEY.

Mr. Madgin left home by an early train on the morning of the day following that on which Lady Chillington had received a reply from Sir John Pennythorne. His first intention had been to make the best of his way to Windermere, and there ascertain the exact locality of Bon Repos. But a fresh view of the case presented itself to his mind as he lay thinking in bed. Instead of taking the train for the North, he took one for the South, and found himself at Euston as the London clocks were striking twelve. After an early dinner, and a careful consultation of the Post Office Directory, Mr. Madgin ordered a hansom, and was driven to Hatton Garden, in and about which unfragrant locality the diamond merchants most do congregate. After due inquiries made and answered, Mr. Madgin was driven eastward for another mile or more. Here a similar set of inquiries elicited a similar set of answers. Mr. Madgin went back to his hotel well pleased with his day's work.

His inquiries had satisfied him that no green diamond of the size and value attributed to the Great Hara had either been seen or heard of in the London market during the last twenty years. It still remained to test the foreign markets in the same way. Mr. Madgin's idea was that this work could be done better by some trustworthy agent well acquainted with the trade than by himself. He accordingly left instructions with an eminent diamond merchant to have all needful inquiries made at Paris, Amsterdam, and St. Petersburg, as to whether such a stone as the Great Hara had come under the cognizance of the trade any time during the last twenty years. The result of the inquiry was to be communicated to Mr. Madgin by letter.

Next day Mr. Madgin journeyed down to Windermere. Arrived at Bowness, he found no difficulty in ascertaining the exact locality of Bon Repos, the house and its owner being known by sight or repute to almost every inhabitant of the little town. Mr. Madgin stopped all night at Bowness. Next morning he hired a small boat, and was pulled across the lake to a point about half a mile below Bon Repos, and there he landed.

Mr. Madgin was travelling *incog.* The name upon his portmanteau was "Joshua Deedes, Esq." He was dressed in a suit of glossy black, with a white neck-cloth, and gold-rimmed spectacles. He had quite an episcopal air. He did not call himself a clergyman, but people were at liberty to accept him as one if they chose.

Assisted by the most unimpeachable of malaccas, Mr. Madgin took the high-road that wound round the grounds of Bon Repos. But so completely was the house hidden in its nest of greenery that the chimney-pots were all of it that was visible from the road. But

under a spur of the hill by which the house was shut in at the back, Mr. Madgin found a tiny hamlet of a dozen houses, by far the most imposing of which was the village inn—hotel, it called itself, and showed to the world the sign of The Jolly Fishers. Into this humble hostelry Mr. Madgin marched without hesitation, and called for some refreshment. So impressed was the landlord with the clerical appearance of his guest that he whipped off his apron, ushered him into the state parlour, and made haste to wait upon him himself. He, the guest, had actually called for a bottle of the best dry sherry, and when the landlord took it in he invited him to fetch another glass, and come and join him over it. Mr. Joshua Deedes was a tourist—well-to-do, without doubt; the landlord could see as much as that—and having never visited Lakeland before, he was naturally delighted with the freshness and novelty of everything that he saw. The change from London life was so thorough, so complete in every respect, that he could hardly believe he had left the great Babel no longer ago than yesterday. It seemed years since he had been there. He had thought Bowness a charming spot, but this little nook surpassed Bowness, inasmuch as it was still farther removed and shut out from the frivolities and follies of the great world. Here one was almost alone with Nature and her wondrous works. Then Mr. Deedes filled up his own glass and that of the landlord.

"Perhaps, sir, you would like to stay here for a night or two," suggested the host timidly; "we have a couple of spare beds."

"Nothing would please me better," answered Mr. Deedes, with solemn alacrity. "I feel that the healthful air of these hills is doing me an immensity of good. Kindly send to the Crown at Bowness for my portmanteau, and ascertain what you have in the house for dinner."

After a while came dinner, and a little later on, Mr. Deedes having expressed a desire to see something of the lake, the landlord sent to borrow a boat, and then took his guest for an hour's row on Windermere. From the water they had a capital view of the low white front of Bon Repos. There were two gentlemen smoking on the terrace. The lesser of the two, said the landlord, was M. Platzoff. The taller man was Captain Ducie, at present a guest at Bon Repos. Then the landlord wandered off into a long, rambling account of Bon Repos and its owner. Mr. Deedes was much interested in hearing about the eccentric habits and strange mode of life of M. Platzoff, with the details of which the landlord was as thoroughly acquainted as though he had formed one of the household. Their row on the lake was prolonged for a couple of hours, and Mr. Deedes went back to the hotel much edified.

In the dusk of evening he encountered Cleon, M. Platzoff's valet, as he was lounging slowly down the village street on his way to The Jolly Fishers. Mr. Deedes scrutinised the dark-skinned servant narrowly in passing. "The face of a cunning, unscrupulous rascal, if

ever I saw one," he muttered to himself. "Nevertheless, I must make his acquaintance."

And he did make his acquaintance. As Cleon and the landlord sat hob-nobbing together in the little snuggery behind the bar, Mr. Deedes put in his head to ask a question of the latter. Thereupon the landlord begged permission to introduce his friend Mr. Cleon to the notice of his guest, Mr. Deedes. The two men bowed, Mr. Cleon rather sulkily; but Mr. Deedes was all affability and smiling *bonhommie*. He had several questions to ask, and he sat down on the only vacant chair in the little room. He wanted to know the distance to Keswick; how much higher Helvellyn was than Fairfield; whether it was possible to get any potted char for breakfast, and so on; on all which questions both Cleon and the landlord had something to say. But talking being dry work, as Mr. Deedes smilingly observed, brought naturally to mind the fact that the landlord had some excellent dry sherry, and that one could not do better this warm evening than have another bottle fetched up out of the cool depths of the cellar. Mr. Cleon, being pressed, was nothing loth to join Mr. Deedes over this bottle. Mr. Deedes, without condescending into familiarity, made himself very agreeable, but did not sit long. After imbibing a couple of glasses, he bade the landlord and the valet an affable good-night, and went off decorously to bed.

Mr. Deedes was up betimes next morning, and took a three miles' trudge over the hills before breakfast. He spent a quiet day mooning about the neighbourhood, and really enjoying himself after his own fashion, although his mind was busily engaged all the time in trying to solve the mystery of the Great Diamond. In the evening he took care to have a few pleasant words with Cleon, and then early to bed. Two more days passed away after a similar quiet fashion, and then Mr. Deedes began to chafe inwardly at the small progress he was making.

Although he had been so successful in tracing out M. Platzoff, and in working the case up to its present point in a remarkably short space of time, he acknowledged to himself that he was completely baffled when he came to consider what his next step ought to be. He could not, indeed, see his way to a single step beyond his present standpoint. Much as he seemed to have gained at a single leap, was he in reality one hair's-breadth nearer the secret object of his quest than on that day when the name of the Great Hara Diamond first made music in his ears? He doubted it greatly.

When he first decided on coming down to Bon Repos, he trusted that the chapter of accidents and the good fortune which had so far attended him would somehow put it in his power to scrape an acquaintance with M. Platzoff himself, and such an acquaintance once made, it would be his own fault if, in one way or another, he did not make it subservient to the ambitious end he had in view.

But in M. Platzoff he found a recluse: a man who made no

fresh acquaintanceships; who held the whole tourist tribe in horror, and who even kept himself aloof from such of the neighbouring families as might be considered his equals in social position. It was quite evident to Mr. Deedes that he might reside close to Bon Repos for twenty years, and at the end of that time not have succeeded in addressing half-a-dozen words to its owner.

Then again he had succeeded little better with regard to Cleon than with regard to Cleon's master. All his advances, made with a mixture of affability and *bonhommie* which Mr. Deedes flattered himself was irresistible with most people, were productive of little or no effect upon the mulatto. He received them, not with suspicion, for he had nothing of which to suspect harmless Mr. Deedes, but with a sort of sulky indifference, as though he considered them rather a nuisance than otherwise, and would have preferred their being offered to anyone else. Did Mr. Deedes, in conversation with him and the landlord, venture to bring the talk round to Bon Repos and M. Platzoff; did he hazard the remark that since his arrival in Lakeland several people had spoken to him of the strange character and eccentric mode of life of Mr. Cleon's employer — he was met with a stony silence, which told him as plainly as any words could have done that M. Platzoff and his affairs were matters that in no wise concerned him. It was quite evident that neither the Russian nor his dark-skinned valet was of any avail for the furtherance of that scheme which had brought Mr. Deedes all the way to the wilds of Westmoreland.

He began to despair, and was on the point of writing to Mirpah, thinking that her shrewd woman's wit might be able to suggest some stratagem or mode of attack other than that made use of by him, when suddenly a prospect opened before him such as in his wildest dreams of success he dared not have bodied forth. He was not slow to avail himself of it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ENTER MADGIN JUNIOR.

"BEG your pardon, sir," said the landlord of The Jolly Fishers one morning to his guest, Mr. Deedes, "but I think I have more than once heard you say that you came from London?"

"I do come from London," answered Mr. Deedes; "I am Cockney born and bred. I came direct from London to Windermere. But why do you ask?"

"Simply, sir, because they are in want of a footman at Bon Repos, to fill up the place of one who has gone away to get married. Mossoo Platzoff don't like advertising for servants, and Mr. Cleon is at a loss where to find a fellow that can wait at table and has some manners about him. You see, sir, the country louts about here are

neither useful nor ornamental in a gentleman's house. Now, sir, it struck me that among your friends you might perhaps know some gentleman who would be glad to recommend a respectable man for such a place. Must have a good character from his last situation, and be able to wait at table; and I hope, sir, you will pardon the liberty I've taken in mentioning it to you."

Mr. Deedes was holding up a glass of wine to the light as the landlord brought his little speech to a close. He sipped the wine slowly, with his eyes bent on the floor; then he put down the glass and rubbed his hands softly one within the other. Then he spoke.

"It happens, singularly enough," he said, "that a particular friend of mine—Mr. Madgin, a gentleman, I daresay, whose name you have never heard—spoke to me only three weeks ago about one of his people for whom he was desirous of obtaining another situation, he himself being about to break up his establishment and go to reside on the Continent. I will write Mr. Madgin to-night, and if the young man has not engaged himself, I will ask my friend to send him down here. He will have a first-class testimonial, and I have no doubt he would suit M. Platzoff admirably. I am obliged to you, landlord, for mentioning this matter to me."

Mr. Deedes went off at once to his room, and wrote and despatched the following letter:—

"My dear Boy,—I saw by an advertisement in last week's *Era* that you are still out of an engagement. I have an opening for you down here in a drama of real life. It will be greatly to your advantage to accept it, so do not hesitate for a moment. Come without delay. Book yourself from Euston Square to Windermere. Take steamer from the latter place to Newby Bridge. There, at the hotel, await my arrival. Bear in mind that down here my name is *Mr. Joshua Deedes*, and that yours is *James Jasmin*, a footman, at present out of a situation. To a person of your intelligence I need not say more.

"Your affectionate father,

"S. M.

"N.B.—This communication is secret and confidential. All expenses paid. Do not on any account fail to come. I will be at the Newby Bridge Hotel on Thursday morning at eleven."

This letter he addressed, "Mr. James Madgin, Royal Tabard Theatre, Southwark, London." Having posted it with his own hands, he went for a long, solitary ramble among the hills. He wanted to think out and elaborate the great scheme that had unfolded itself before his dazzled eyes while the landlord was talking to him. He had seen the whole compass of it at a glance; he wanted now to consider it in detail. There was an elation in his eye and an elasti-

city in his tread that made him seem ten years younger than on the previous day.

He had requested the landlord to tell Mr. Cleon what steps he was about to take with the view of supplying M. Platzoff with a new footman. In these proceedings the mulatto acquiesced ungraciously. Truth to tell, he was bored by Mr. Deedes and his friendly officiousness, and although secretly glad that the trouble of hunting out a new servant had been taken off his hands, he was not a man willingly to acknowledge his obligations to another.

Mr. Deedes set out immediately after breakfast on Thursday morning, and having walked to the Ferry Hotel, he took the steamer from that place to Newby Bridge. Mr. James Jasmin was at the landing-stage, awaiting his arrival. After shaking hands heartily, and inquiring as to each other's health, the two wandered off arm-in-arm down one of the quiet country roads. Then Mr. Deedes explained to Mr. Jasmin his reasons for sending for him from London, and with what view he was desirous of introducing him into Bon Repos. The younger man listened attentively. When the elder one had done, he said:

"Father, this is a very pretty scheme of yours; but it seems to me that I am to be nothing more than a cat's-paw in the affair. You have only given me half your confidence. You must give me the whole of it before I can agree to act as you wish. I want to hear the whole history of the case, and how you came to be mixed up in it. Further, I want to know how much Lady Chillington intends to give you in case you succeed in getting back the diamond, and what my share of the recompense is to be?"

"Dear, dear! what a headstrong boy you are!" moaned Mr. Deedes. "Why can't you be content with what I tell you, and leave the rest to me?"

The younger man made no reply in words, but turned abruptly on his heel and began to walk back.

"James! James!" cried the old man, catching his son by the coat tails, "do not go off in that way. It shall be as you wish. I will tell you everything. You headstrong boy! Do you want to break your poor father's heart?"

"Break your fiddlestick!" said Mr. Jasmin, irreverently. "Let us sit down on this green bank, and you shall tell me all about the Diamond while I try the quality of these cigars. I am all attention."

Thus adjured, Mr. Deedes sighed deeply, wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, looked meditatively into his hat for a few seconds, and then began.

Beginning with the narrative of Sergeant Nicholas, Mr. Deedes went on from that point to detail by what means he had discovered that M. Platzoff was still alive and where he was now living. Then he told of his coming down to Bon Repos, and all that had happened to him since that time. He had already told his son with what view

he had sent for him from London—that not being able to make any further headway in the case himself, he was desirous of introducing his dear James, in the guise of a servant, into Bon Repos, as an agent on whose integrity and cleverness he could alike depend.

"But you have not yet told your dear James the amount of the honorarium you will be entitled to receive in case you recover the stolen Diamond."

"What do you say to five thousand pounds?" asked Mr. Deedes in a solemn whisper.

The younger man opened his eyes. "Hum! A very pretty little amount," he said, "but I have yet to learn what proportion of that sum will percolate into the pockets of this child. In other words, what is to be my share of the plunder?"

"Plunder, my dear boy, is a strange word to make use of. Pray be more particular in your choice of terms. The mercenary view you take of the case is very distressing to my feelings. A proper recompense for your time and trouble it was my intention to make you; but as regards the five thousand pounds, I hoped to be able to fund it in toto, to add it to my little capital, and to leave it intact for those who will come after me. And you know very well, James, that there will only be you and Mirpah to divide whatever the old man may die possessed of."

"But, my dear dad, you are not going to die for these five-and-twenty years. My present necessities are imperative: like the daughters of the horse-leech, they are continually asking for more."

"James! James! how changed you are from the dear, unselfish boy of ten years ago!"

"And very proper too. But do let us be business-like, if you please. The rôle of the 'heavy father' doesn't suit you at all. Keep sentiment out of the case, and then we shall do very well. Listen to my ultimatum. The day I place the Hara Diamond in your hands you must give me a cheque for fifteen hundred pounds."

"Fifteen hundred pounds!" gasped the old man. "James! James! do you wish to see me die in a workhouse?"

"Fifteen hundred pounds. Not one penny less," reiterated Madgin, junior. "What do you mean by a workhouse? You will then have three thousand, five hundred pounds to the good, and will have got the job done very cheaply. But there is another side to the question. Both you and I have been counting our chickens before they are hatched. Suppose I don't succeed in laying hold of the Diamond—what then? And, mind you, I don't think I shall succeed. To begin with—I don't half believe in the existence of your big Diamond. It looks to me very much like a hoax from beginning to end. But granting the existence of the stone, and that it was stolen by your Russian friend, are not the chances a thousand to one either that he has disposed of it long ago, or else that he has hidden it away in some place so safe that the cleverest burglar in

London would be puzzled to get at it? Suppose, for instance, that it is deposited by him at his banker's: in that case, what are your expectations worth? Not a brass farthing. No, my dear dad, the risk of failure is too great, outweighing, as it does, the chances of success a thousandfold, for me to have the remotest hope of ever fingering the fifteen hundred pounds. I have, therefore, to appraise my time and services as the hero of a losing cause. I say the hero; for I certainly consider that I am about to play the leading part in the forthcoming drama—that I am the bright particular 'star' round which the lesser lights will all revolve. Such being the case, I do not consider that I am rating my services too highly when I name two hundred guineas as the lowest sum for which I am willing to play the part of James Jasmin, footman, spy and amateur detective."

Again Mr. Deedes gasped for breath. He opened his mouth, but words refused to come. He shook his head with a fine tragic air, and wiped his eyes.

"Take an hour or two to consider it," said the son, indulgently. "If you agree to my proposition, I shall want it put down in black and white and properly signed. If you do not agree to it, I start back for town by this night's mail."

"James, James, you are one too many for me!" said the old man, pathetically. "Let us go and dine."

The first thing Madgin junior did after they got back to the hotel was to place before his father a sheet of note-paper, an inkstand and a pen. "Write," he said; and the old man wrote to his dictation:—

"I, Solomon Madgin, on the part of Lady Chillington, of Deepley Walls, do hereby promise and bind myself to pay over into the hands of my son, James Madgin, the sum of fifteen hundred pounds (£1,500) on the day that the aforesaid James Madgin places safely in my hands the stone known as the Hara Diamond.

"Should the aforesaid James Madgin, from causes beyond his own control, find himself unable to obtain possession of the said Diamond, I, Solomon Madgin, bind myself to reimburse him in the sum of two hundred guineas (£210) as payment in full for the time and labour expended by him in his search for the Hara Diamond.

"(Signed) SOLOMON MADGIN.

"July 21st, 18—."

Mr. Madgin threw down the pen when he had signed his name and chuckled quietly to himself. "You don't think, dear boy, that a foolish paper like that would be worth anything in a court of law?" he said, interrogatively.

"As a legal document it would probably be laughed at," said Madgin junior. "But in another point of view I have no doubt that it would carry with it a certain moral weight. For instance, suppose the claim embodied in this paper were disputed, and I were compelled to resort to ulterior measures, the written promise given

by you might not be found legally binding, but, on the other hand, neither Lady Chillington nor you would like to see that document copied in extenso into all the London papers, nor the whole of your remarkable scheme for the recovery of the Hara Diamond detailed by the plaintiff in open court, to be talked over next morning through the length and breadth of England. "Extraordinary Case between a Lady of Rank and an Actor." How would that read, eh?"

"My dear James, let me shake hands with you," exclaimed the old man with emotion. "You are a most extraordinary young man. I am proud of you, my dear boy, I am indeed. What a pity that you adopted the stage as your profession! You ought to have entered the law. In the law you would have risen—nothing could have kept you down."

"That is as it may be," returned James. "If I am satisfied with my profession you have no cause to grumble. But here comes dinner."

Mr. James Madgin was first low comedian at one of the transpontine theatres. The height of his ambition was to have the offer of an engagement from one of the West-end managers. Only give him the opportunity, and he felt sure that he could work his way with a cultivated audience. When a lad of sixteen he had run away from home with a company of strolling players, and from that time he had been a devoted follower of Thespis. He had roughed it patiently in the provinces for years, his only consolation during a long season of poverty and neglect arising from the conviction that he was slowly but surely improving himself in the difficult art he had chosen as his mode of earning his daily bread. When the manager of the Royal Tabard, then on a provincial tour, picked him out from all his brother actors, and offered him a Metropolitan engagement, James Madgin thought himself on the high road to fame and fortune. Time had served to show him the fallacy of his expectations. He had been four years at the Royal Tabard, during the whole of which time he had been in receipt of a tolerable salary for his position—that of first low comedian; but fame and fortune still seemed as far from his grasp as ever. With opportunity given him, he had hoped one day to electrify the town. But that hope was now buried very deep down in his heart, and if ever brought out, like an "old property," to be looked at and turned about, its only greeting was a quiet sneer, after which it was relegated to the limbo whence it had been disinterred. James Madgin had given up the expectation of ever shining in the theatrical system as a "great star;" he was trying to content himself with the thought of living and dying a respectable mediocrity—useful, ornamental even, in his proper sphere, but certainly never destined to set the Thames on fire. The manager of the Tabard had recently died, and at present James Madgin was in want of an engagement.

As father and son sat together at table, you might, knowing their

relationship to each other, have readily detected a certain likeness between them; but it was a likeness of expression rather than of features, and would scarcely have been noticed by any casual observer.

Madgin junior was a fresh complexioned, sprightly young fellow of six or seven and twenty, with dark, frank-looking eyes, a prominent nose, and thin mobile lips. He had dark-brown hair, closely cropped; and, as became one of his profession, he was guiltless of either beard or moustache. Like Mirpah, he inherited his eyes and nose from his mother, but in no other feature could he be said to resemble his beautiful sister.

Father and son were very merry over dinner, and did not spare the wine afterwards. The old man could not sufficiently admire the shrewd business-like aptitude shown by his son in their recent conference. The latter's extraction of a written promise by his own father was an action that the elder man could fully appreciate; it was a stroke of business that touched him to the heart, and made him feel proud of his "dear James."

"But how will you manage about waiting at table?" asked Solomon of his son as they strolled out together to smoke their cigars on the little bridge by the hotel. "I am afraid that you will betray your ignorance, and break down when you come to be put to the test."

"Never fear; I shall pull through somehow," answered James. "I am not so ignorant on such matters as you may suppose. Geary used to say that I did the flunkey business better than any man he ever had at the Tabard: I have always been celebrated for my footmen. Of course I am quite aware that the real article is very different from its stage counterfeit, but I have actually been at some pains to study the genus in its different varieties, and to arrive at some knowledge of the special duties it has to perform. One of our supers had been footman in the family of a well-known marquis, and from him I picked up a good deal of useful information. Then, whenever I have been out to a swell dinner of any kind, I have always kept my eye on the fellows who waited at table. So what with one thing and what with another, I don't think I shall make any very terrible blunders."

"I hope not, or else Mr. Cleon will give you your *congé*, and that will spoil everything. Further, as regards the mulatto, I have a word or two to say to you. It is quite evident to me that he is the presiding genius at Bon Repos. If you wish to retain your situation you must pay court to him far more than to M. Platzoff, with whom, indeed, it is doubtful whether you will ever come into personal contact. You must therefore, my dear boy, swallow your pride for the time being, and take care to let the mulatto see that you regard him as a patron to whose kindness you hold yourself deeply indebted."

"All that I can do, and more, to serve my own ends," answered

the son. "Your words are words of wisdom, and shall live in my memory."

Mr. Madgin stopped with his son till summoned by the whistle of the last steamer. The two bade each other an affectionate farewell. When next they met it would be as strangers.

Mr. Cleon and the landlord were enjoying the cool of the evening and their cigars outside the house as Mr. Deedes walked up to The Jolly Fishers. He stopped for a moment to speak to them.

"I had a note this morning from my friend Mr. Madgin, of Deepley Walls," he said, "in which that gentleman informs me that the young man, James Jasmin, will be with you in the course of the day after to-morrow at the latest. He hopes that Jasmin will suit you, and he is evidently much pleased that a position has been offered him in an establishment in every way so unexceptionable as that of Bon Repos."

The mulatto's white teeth glistened in the twilight. Evidently he was pleased. He muttered a few words in reply. Mr. Deedes bowed courteously, wished him and the landlord a very good night, and withdrew.

Late in the afternoon of the day but one following that of his visit to Newby Bridge, as Mr Deedes was busy with a London newspaper three or four days old, the landlord ushered a young man into his room, who, with a bow and a carrying of the forefinger to his forehead, announced himself as James Jasmin from Deepley Walls.

"Don't you go, landlord," said Mr. Deedes; "I may want you." Then he deliberately put on his gold-rimmed glasses, and proceeded to take a leisurely survey of the new comer, who was dressed in a neat (but not new) suit of black, and was standing in a respectful attitude, and slowly brushing his hat with one sleeve of his coat.

"So you are James Jasmin, from Deepley Walls, are you?" asked Mr. Deedes, looking him slowly down from head to feet.

"Yes, sir, I am the party, sir," answered James.

"Well, Jasmin, and how did you leave my friend Mr. Madgin? and what is the latest news from Deepley Walls?"

"Master and family all pretty well, sir, thank you. Master has got a tenant for the old house, and the family will all start for the Continong next week."

"Well, Jasmin, I hope you will contrive to suit your new employer as well as you appear to have suited my friend. Landlord, let him have some dinner, and he had better perhaps wait here till Mr. Cleon comes down this evening."

When Mr. Cleon arrived a couple of hours later, Jasmin was duly presented to him. The mulatto scrutinised him keenly and seemed pleased with his appearance, which was decidedly superior to that of the ordinary run of Jeameses. He finished by asking him for his testimonials.

"I have none with me, sir," answered Jasmin, discreetly em-

phasising the *sir*. "I can only refer you to my late master, Mr. Madgin, of Deepley Walls, who will gladly speak as to my qualifications and integrity."

"That being the case, I will take you for the present on the recommendation of Mr. Deedes, and will write Mr. Madgin in the course of a post or two. You can go up to Bon Repos at once, and I will induct you into your new duties to-morrow."

Jasmin thanked Mr. Cleon respectfully and withdrew. Ten minutes later, with his modest valise in his hand, he set out for his new home. He and Mr. Deedes did not see each other again. Next day Mr. Deedes announced that he was summoned home by important letters. He bade the landlord and Cleon a friendly farewell, and left early on the following morning in time to catch the first train from Windermere going south.

CHAPTER XXV.

MADGIN JUNIOR'S FIRST REPORT.

Mr. Madgin senior lost no time after his arrival at home before hastening up to Deepley Walls to see Lady Chillington. He had a brief conference with Mirpah while discussing his modest chop and glass of bitter ale; and he found time to read a letter which had arrived for him some days previously from the London diamond merchant whom he had employed to make inquiries as to whether any such gem as the Great Hara had been offered for sale at any of the great European marts during the past twenty years. The letter was an assurance that no such stone had been in the market, nor was any such known to be in the hands of any private individual.

Mr. Madgin took the letter with him to Deepley Walls. In her grim way Lady Chillington seemed greatly pleased to see him. She was all impatience to hear what news he had to tell her. But Mr. Madgin had his reservations; he did not deem it advisable to detail to her ladyship step by step all that he had done. Her sense of honour might revolt at certain things he had found it necessary to do in furtherance of the great object he had in view. He told her of his inquiries among the London diamond merchants, and read to her the letter he had received from one of them. Then he went on to describe Bon Repos and its owner from the glimpses he had had of both. For all such details her ladyship betrayed a curiosity that seemed as if it would never be satisfied. He next went on to inform her that he had succeeded in placing his son as footman at Bon Repos, and that everything now depended on the discoveries James might succeed in making. But nothing was said as to the false pretences and the changed name under which Madgin junior had entered M. Platzoff's household. Those were details which Mr. Madgin kept judiciously to himself. Her ladyship was perfectly satisfied

with his report; she was more than satisfied—she was pleased. She was very sanguine as to the existence of the diamond, and also as to its retention by M. Platzoff; far more so, in fact, than Mr. Madgin himself was. But the latter was too shrewd a man of business to parade his doubts of success before a client who paid so liberally, so long as her hobby was ridden after her own fashion. Mr. Madgin's chief aim in life was to ride other people's hobbies, and be well paid for his jockeyship.

"I am highly gratified, Mr. Madgin," said her ladyship, "by the style, *plein de finesse*, in which you have so far conducted this delicate investigation. I will not ask you what your next step is to be. You know far better than I can tell you what ought to be done. I leave the matter with confidence in your hands."

"Your ladyship is very kind," observed Mr. Madgin, deferentially. "I will do my best to deserve a continuance of your good opinion."

"As week after week goes by, Mr. Madgin," resumed Lady Chillington, "the conviction seems to take deeper root within me that that man—that villain—M. Platzoff, has my son's diamond still in his possession. I have a sort of spiritual consciousness that such is the case. My waking intuitions, my dreams by night, all point to the same end. You, with your cold, worldly sense, may laugh at such things; we women, with our finer organisation, know how often the truth comes to us on mystic wings. The diamond will yet be mine!"

"What nonsense women sometimes talk," said Mr. Madgin contemptuously to himself as he walked back through the park. "Who would believe that my lady, so sensible on most things, could talk such utter rubbish. But women have a way of leaping to results, and ignoring processes, that is simply astounding to men of common sense. The diamond hers, indeed! Although I have been so successful so far, there is as much difference between what I have done and what has yet to be done as there is between the simple alphabet and a mathematical theorem. To-morrow's post ought to bring me a letter from Bon Repos."

To-morrow's post did bring Mr. Madgin a letter from Bon Repos. The writer of it was not his son, but Cleon. It was addressed, as a matter of course, to Deepley Walls, of which place the mulatto had been led to believe Mr. Madgin was the proprietor. The note, which was couched in tolerable English, was simply a request to be furnished with a testimonial as to the character and abilities of James Jasmin, late footman at Deepley Walls. Mr. Madgin replied by return of post as under:—

"Deepley Walls, July 27th.

"Sir,—In reply to your favour of the 25th inst., inquiring as to the character and respectability of James Jasmin, late a footman in my employ, I beg to say that I can strongly recommend him, and have

much pleasure in so doing, for any similar employment under you. Jasmin was with me for several years; during the whole time I found him to be trustworthy, sober and intelligent in an eminent degree. Had I not been reducing my establishment previous to a lengthened residence in the south of Europe, I should certainly have retained Jasmin in the position which he has occupied for so long a time with credit to himself and with satisfaction to me.

"I have the honour, sir, to remain,

"Your obedient servant,

"——— Cleon, Esq., "Solomon Madgin.

"Bon Repos, Windermere."

After writing and despatching the above epistle, over the composition of which he chuckled to himself several times, Mr. Madgin was obliged to wait, with what contentment was possible to him, the receipt of a communication from his son. But one day passed after another without bringing news from Bon Repos, till Mr. Madgin grew fearful that some disaster had befallen both James and his scheme. At length he made up his mind to wait two days longer, and should no letter come within that time, to start at once for Windermere. Fortunately his anxiety was relieved and the journey rendered unnecessary by the receipt, next day, of a long letter from his son. It was Mirpah who took it from the postman's hand, and Mirpah took it to her father in high glee. She knew the writing and deciphered the post-mark. For once in his life Mr. Madgin was too agitated to read. He put his hand to his side, and motioned Mirpah to open the letter.

"Read it," he said in a husky voice, as she was about to hand it to him. So Mirpah sat down near her father and read what follows:—

"Bon Repos, July

"(some date, but I'll be hanged if I know what).

"My dear Dad,—In some rustic nook reclining, silken tresses softly twining, Far-off bells so faintly ringing, While we list the blackbird singing, Merrily his roundelay. There! I composed those lines this morning during the process of shaving. I don't think they are very bad. I put them at the beginning of my letter so as to make sure that you will read them, a process of which I might reasonably be doubtful had I left them for the fag end of my communication. Learn, sir, that you have a son who is a born poet!!!

"But now to business.

"Don't hurry over my letter, dear dad; don't run away with the idea that I have any grand discovery to lay before you. My epistle will be merely a record of trifles and commonplaces, and that simply from the fact that I have nothing better to write about. To me, at least, they seem nothing but trifles. For you they may possess an occult significance of which I know nothing.

"In the first place. On the day following that of your departure from Windermere, I was duly inducted by Cleon into my new duties. They are few in number, and by no means difficult. So far I have contrived to get through them without any desperate blunder. Another thing I have done of which you will be pleased to hear: I have contrived to ingratiate myself with the mulatto, and am in high favour with him. You were right in your remarks; he is worth cultivation, in so far that he is all-powerful in our little establishment. M. Platzoff never interferes in the management of Bon Repos. Everything is left to Cleon; and whatever the mulatto may be in other respects, so far as I can judge he is quite worthy of the trust reposed in him. I believe him to be thoroughly attached to his master.

"Of M. Platzoff I have very little to tell you. Even in his own house and among his own people he is a recluse. He has his own special rooms, and three-fourths of his time is spent in them. Above all things he dislikes to see strange faces about him, and I have been instructed by Cleon to keep out of his way as much as possible. Even the old servants, people who have been under his roof for years, let themselves be seen by him as seldom as need be. In person he is a little, withered-up, yellow-skinned man, as dry as a last year's pippin, but very keen, bright and vivacious. He speaks such excellent English that he must have lived in this country for many years. One thing I have discovered about him, that he is a great smoker. He has a room set specially apart for the practice of the sacred rite to which he retires every day as soon as dinner is over, and from which he seldom emerges again till it is time to retire for the night. Cleon alone is privileged to enter this room. I have never yet been inside it. Equally forbidden ground is M. Platzoff's bedroom, and a small study beyond, all *en suite*.

"Those who keep servants keep spies under their roof. It has been part of my purpose to make myself agreeable to the older domestics at Bon Repos, and from them I have picked up several little facts which all Mr. Cleon's shrewdness has not been able entirely to conceal. In this way I have learned that M. Platzoff is a confirmed opium-smoker. That once, or sometimes twice, a week he shuts himself up in his room and smokes himself into a sort of trance, in which he remains unconscious for hours. That at such times Cleon has to look after him as though he were a child; and that it depends entirely on the mulatto as to whether he ever emerges from his state of coma, or stops in it till he dies. The accuracy of this latter statement, however, I must beg leave to doubt.

"Further gossip has informed me, whether truly or falsely I am not in a position to judge, that M. Platzoff is a refugee from his own country. That were he to set foot on the soil of Russia, a life-long banishment to Siberia would be the mildest fate that he could expect; and that neither in France nor in Austria would he be safe from arrest. The people who come as guests to Bon Repos are, so

I am informed, in nearly every instance foreigners, and, as a natural consequence, they are all set down by the servants' gossip as red-hot republicans, thirsting for the blood of kings and aristocrats, and willing to put a firebrand under every throne in Europe. In fact, there cannot be a popular outbreak against bad government in any part of Europe without M. Platzoff and his friends being credited with having at least a finger in the pie.

"All these statements and suppositions you will of course accept *cum grano salis*. They may have their value as serving to give you a rude and exaggerated idea as to what manner of man is the owner of Bon Repos; and it is quite possible that some elements of truth may be hidden in them. To me, M. Platzoff seems nothing more than a mild old gentleman; a little eccentric, it may be, as differing from our English notions in many things. Not a smiling fiend in patent boots and white cravat, whose secret soul is bent on murder and rapine; but a shy valetudinarian, whose only firebrand is a harmless fusee wherewith to light a pipe of fragrant cavendish.

"One permanent guest we have at Bon Repos—a guest who was here before my arrival, and of whose departure no signs are yet visible. That is why I call him permanent. His name is Ducie, and he is an ex-captain in the English army. He is a tall, handsome man of four or five and forty, and is a thorough gentleman both in manners and appearance. I like him much, and he has taken quite a fancy to me. One thing I can see quite plainly; that he and Cleon are quietly at daggers drawn. Why they should be so I cannot tell, unless it is that Cleon is jealous of Captain Ducie's influence over Platzoff; although the difference in social position of the two men ought to preclude any feeling of that kind. Captain Ducie might be M. Platzoff's very good friend without infringing in the slightest degree on the privileges of Cleon as his master's favourite servant. On one point I am certain: that the mulatto suspects Ducie of some purpose or covert scheme in making so long a stay at Bon Repos. He has asked me to act as a sort of spy on the Captain's movements; to watch his comings and goings, his hours of getting up and going to bed, and to report to him, Cleon, anything that I may see in the slightest degree out of the common way.

"It was not without a certain inward qualm that I accepted the position thrust upon me by Cleon. In accepting it, I flatter myself that I took a common-sense view of the case. In the *petit* drama of real life in which I am now acting an uneventful part, I look upon myself as a 'general utility' man, bound to enact any and every character which my manager may think proper to entrust into my hands. Now, you are my manager, and if it seem to me conducive to your interests (you being absent) that, in addition to my present character, I should be a 'cast' for that of spy or amateur detective, I see no good reason why I should refuse it

So far, however, all my Fouché-like devices have resulted in nothing. The Captain's comings and goings—in fact, all his movements—are of a commonplace and uninteresting kind. But I have this advantage, that the character I have undertaken enables me to assume, with Cleon's consent, certain privileges such as under other circumstances would never have been granted me. Further, should I succeed in discovering anything of importance, it by no means follows that I should consider myself bound to reveal the same to Cleon. It might be greatly more to my interest to retain any such facts for my own use. Meanwhile, I wait and watch.

"Thus you will perceive, my dear dad, that an element of interest—a dramatic element—is being slowly evolved out of the commonplace duties of my position. This nucleus of interest may grow and develop into something startling; or it may die slowly out and expire for lack of material to feed itself upon. In any case, dear dad, you may expect a frequent feuilleton from

"Your affectionate Son,

"J. M. (otherwise JAMES JASMIN).

"P. S.—I should not like to be a real flunkey all my life. Such a position is not without its advantages to a man of a lazy turn, but it is terribly soul-subduing. Not a sign yet of the G. H. D."

"There is nothing much in all this to tell her ladyship," said Mr. Madgin, as he took off his spectacles and refolded the letter. "Still, I do not think it by any means a discouraging report. If James's patience only equal his shrewdness and audacity, and if there be really anything to worm out, he will be sure to make himself master of it in the course of time. Ah! if he had only my patience, now—the patience of an old man who has won half his battles by playing a waiting game."

"Is it not possible that Lady Chillington may want you to read the letter?"

"It is quite possible. But James's irreverent style is hardly suited in parts for her ladyship's ears. You, dear child, must make an improved copy of the letter. Your own good taste will tell you which sentences require to be altered or expunged. Here and there you may work in a neat compliment to your father; as coming direct from James, her ladyship will not deem it out of place—it will not sound fulsome in her ears, and will serve to remind her of what she too often forgets—that in Solomon Madgin she has a faithful steward, who ought to be better rewarded than he is. Write out the copy at once, my child, and I will take it up to Deepley Walls the first thing to-morrow morning."

(*To be continued.*)

ABOUT THE WEATHER.

WHY is it that we in England talk so much about the weather? One reason, I suppose, is because we are shy and awkward in the presence of strangers, and the weather is a safe subject far removed from personalities of any kind. Then the variableness of our climate furnishes an opportunity for comment which does not exist in countries where for months there is not a cloud in the sky, and you can tell long before what kind of weather there will be on any particular day.

Whatever else may be said of our English climate, it cannot be accused of monotony. You are not sure of seeing the same sky every morning you arise, than which there is no greater source of ennui. Those of us who have lived long abroad know how tired we got of a cloudless blue sky. We can sympathise with the sailor who, on returning to London from the Mediterranean, joyfully exclaimed—"Here's a jolly old fog, and no more of your confounded blue skies!" Certainly we could do with a little more sunshine in England than we get. It is not true that while we have much weather we have no sunshine, but we have not as much of it as many of us would like. Still England is not as bad as some places; for instance, Halifax, Nova Scotia, where they have nine months' winter and three months' bad weather. Indeed, the English takes rather a good place amongst the climates of the world. It is free from extremes, and allows us to go out every day and at all hours.

However, judging from the way we grumble, it would seem that we are anything but satisfied with our climate.

Scene—Drawing-room at Scarborough. Melissa (writing): "Aunty, darling, how do you spell damnable?" "Good gracious, darling, never use such a word. I am surprised." "Well, but, auntie, I am writing to papa, to tell him about the weather." "Oh, well, my darling, I suppose I may tell you. D-a-m-n-a-b-l-e; but remember that you must not use the word except to describe the weather."

I suppose the clerk of the weather office has long ago ceased trying to satisfy us in this matter. What seems wretched weather to one person makes another happy. Cold, that the young enjoy because it makes them feel their vitality to the tips of their fingers, is death to the old. Those who are fond of skating look out of the windows of their bedrooms, hoping to see a good hard frost. The man who has three or four hunters "eating their heads off" in the stable wishes for open weather, so that he and they may have a run. The farmer says that frost is good for his land; the sportsman, who has hired an expensive shooting, does not like it. A young lady enjoys her walk and looks her best on a fine frosty morning; but

she should not forget that the weather which is so pleasant to her puts thousands of people out of work.

Idle people feel changes of weather most. A man who lives a busy life in a hot climate once said to me: "I do not know why people growl about the heat; for my part, I have no time to be hot." And if the energetic feel heat less than do the indolent, they certainly feel cold less. They are too active to be cold; and perhaps it is easier to make oneself warm in a cold climate than cool in a hot one.

A man who had been complaining because it had not rained for a good while, when the rain did come then grumbled because it did not come sooner. The rich, however, rather than the poor, talk of the "wretched weather," because they have fewer real sorrows to grumble at. Indeed, the poor often set an example of cheerfulness and resignation in this matter which is very praiseworthy. "What wretched weather we are having!" said a man to an old woman of his acquaintance whom he passed on the road. "Well, sir," she replied, "any weather is better than none." Fuller tells us of a gentleman travelling on a misty morning who asked a shepherd—such men being generally skilled in the physiognomy of the heavens—what weather it would be. "It will be," said the shepherd, "what weather shall please me." Being asked to explain his meaning, he said, "Sir, it shall be what weather pleaseth God; and what weather pleaseth God, pleaseth me."

The people who are most satisfied with their climate are the Australians and New Zealanders. I never met one of them who did not, in five minutes, begin to abuse the English climate and glorify his own. They will not admit that it has a single fault, though we have all heard of the hot winds that make the Australian summer terribly oppressive. The fact is that every country has a bad wind, or some other kind of supposed drawback, which is very trying to strangers, but which, whether they know it or not, suits the inhabitants. God knows better than we do the sort of weather that each country should have.

What are we to say about the winter we have lately been enduring? Well, it was very "trying" for us all, and an even stronger word might be used by the poor, the aged, and the delicate. Still, let us remember that without omniscience it is impossible to say whether any given season is good or bad. So infinitely complex are the relations of things that we are very bad judges as to what is best for us. How do we know that our past winter of discontent may not be followed by a glorious summer, and that the two may not be merely antecedent and consequent, but in some degree cause and effect?

On no other subject are people so prone to become panegyrists of the past as in this matter of the weather. "Ah," they say, "we never now have the lovely summers we used to have." Reading the other day Walpole's Letters, I discovered that so far from the summers

in his day being "lovely," they were not uniformly better than the winters: "The way to ensure summer in England," he writes, "is to have it framed and glazed in a comfortable room." This remark was made of the summer of 1773; that of 1784 was not more balmy, judging from the same writer's comment: "The month of June, according to custom immemorial, is as cold as Christmas. I had a fire last night, and all my rosebuds, I believe, would have been very glad to sit by it."

Here is another weather grumble from the same quaint letter-writer: "The deluge began here but on Monday last, and then rained nearly eight-and-forty hours without intermission. My poor bag has not a dry thread to its back. In short, every summer one lives in a state of mutiny and murmur, and I have found the reason: it is because we will affect to have a summer, and have no title to any such thing."

This reminds us of Quin, who, being asked if he had ever seen so bad a winter, replied: "Yes, just such an one last summer." If people could be satisfied about the weather, this sort of summer ought to have pleased the Irishman who, as he warmed his hands at a fire remarked: "What a pity it is that we can't have the cold weather in the summer."

SERENADE.

"Come out! the moon is white, and on the river
The white mist lies;
The twilight deepens, and the stars grow brighter
In the pure, perfect skies;
The dewy woods with silent voices call you;
Come out, heart of my heart, light of my eyes!

"Come out, for where you are not, beauty is not;
Come out, my Dear!
See how the fairies will adorn the meadows
The moment you draw near;
And the world wear that robe and crown of glory
It never wears except when you are here."

In vain!—a little light among the jasmine
Her lattice gleams,
Her white hand at the closing of it lingers
A moment—so it seems—
To drop an unseen rose down to her lover:
White rose—whose scent will sanctify his dreams!

E. Nesbit.

A PHILANTHROPIST.

By Angus Grey.

I.

"AND when I had your own bottle finished, Doctor, an ould man that was passing by to the fair of Kinvarra told me that there was nothin' in the world so good for a stiff arm as goose's grease or crane's lard, rendered, rubbed in, and, says he, in a few days your arm will be as limber as limber. So I went to the keeper at Inchguile, and he shot a crane for me; but there wasn't so much lard in it as I thought there'd be, because it was just after rearing a chitch."

"Well, we must try and get you a better one next time," said the Doctor, nodding farewell to his loquacious patient, one of those non-paying ones who look on a "dispensary ticket" as conveying an unlimited right of discourse on the one hand and attention on the other. But the Doctor was just now in a position of vantage, being seated on his car, on which he slowly jogged out of sight, leaving the victim of rheumatism who had stopped him still experimentally rubbing the joints of his arm.

It was the first of June by the calendar, but the outward signs of the season were but slightly visible in that grey West Country, where stones lay as the chief crop in the fields and innumerable walls took the place of hedges, and a drizzling mist from the Atlantic hid all distant outlines.

The Doctor had been all day face to face with such cheerless surroundings, and was on his way homewards. But presently he stopped at the entrance of a little "boreen," where a wrinkled, red-skirted dame was standing sentry, leaning on a stout blackthorn stick. "Is it me you're looking out for, Mrs. Capel?" he asked. "I hope Mary is no worse to-day."

"She's the one way always," was the reply; "and it wasn't of you I was thinking, Doctor, but standing I was to watch that ruffian of a pig of Mr. Rourke's that had me grand cabbages eat last night, and me in Cloon buying a pound of madder to colour a petticoat. Ah, then, look at him now standing there by the wall watching me out of the corner of his eye!" and flourishing her stick the energetic old lady trotted off to the attack.

"I may as well go in and see Mary," muttered the Doctor, tying the reins to an isolated gate-post, and walking up the narrow lane to the thatched cottage it led to.

"God save all here," he said, putting his head in over the half-door.

"God save you kindly," was the reply from an old man in corduroy

knee-breeches and a tall hat, who sat smoking a short pipe in the deep chimney-corner, and watching with interest the assault of various hens and geese upon the heap of potato-skins remaining in a basket-lid which had done duty as a dinner-table.

The Doctor passed through to a little room beyond, whitewashed and containing a large four-post bed. The invalid, a gentle, consumptive-looking girl, lay on the pillows and smiled a greeting to the Doctor.

His eye, however, passed her, and rested with startled curiosity on a visitor who was sitting by her side, and who rose and bowed slightly. The stranger was a lady, young and slight, with dark eyes and hair and a small, graceful head. He guessed at once she must be Miss Eden, the new Resident Magistrate's sister, of whose ministrations to the poor he had heard much since his return from his late holiday.

He stopped awkwardly, rather confused at so unexpected a meeting; but the stranger held out her hand, and looking up at him said: "I am so glad you have come back; we have wanted you so much."

The Doctor did not answer. The sweet, low voice, with no touch of Irish accent, was a new sound to him, the little hand that she gave him was fairer and smaller and more dainty than any he had ever touched. To say the truth, his early farm-house life and his hospital training and dispensary practice had not brought him into contact with much refinement, and this girl with her slight, childlike figure and soft, earnest eyes seemed to him to have stepped from some unreal world. Then, finding he still held the little hand, he blushed and let it go.

"How are you getting on, Mary?" he asked, turning to his patient.

"Middling, sir, thank you," said the girl. "I do have the cough very bad some nights, but more nights it's better; and the lady, may God enable her, has me well cared."

"I could not do much," said the lady, with an appealing glance, "and you must not be angry with me for meddling with your patients. But now that you have come I am sure Mary will be better."

"Don't be troubling yourself about me," said the sick girl, gently. "I'll never be better till I see Laurence again."

"Oh, don't be giving yourself up like that," said the Doctor, cheerily; "we won't let you die yet awhile."

"I won't die," she answered, gravely, "till the same day that Laurence died: the 13th of September. There's no fear of me till then."

She looked tired, and her visitors left, the Doctor telling his new acquaintance as they walked down the lane what a strong, bright girl this had been till a year ago, when her brother had died of consumption. From that day her health had begun to fail, the winter

had brought a cough, and Easter had found her kept to her bed. It was a hopeless case, he thought, though she might linger for a time.

"Indeed, and she's a loss to us," put in old Mrs. Capel, who had now joined them, having returned from her pursuit of the predatory pig. "She was a great one for slavin', and as strong as any girl on the estate, but she did be frettin' greatly after her brother, and then she got cold out of her little boots that let in the water, and there she's lying now, and couldn't get up if all Ireland was thrusting for it."

The mist had now turned to definite rain, and Louise Eden accepted "a lift" on the Doctor's car, as he had to pass her gate in going home. His shyness soon wore off as the girl talked to him with complete ease and simplicity, first of some of his poor patients, then of herself and her interest in them.

She was half-Irish, she said, her mother having come from this very West Country, but she had lost both her parents early and been brought up at school and with English relatives. Lately her brother, or rather step-brother, having been made an R.M. and appointed to the Cloon district, had asked her to live with him, and this she was but too happy to do. She had always longed to give her life to the poor and especially the Irish poor, of whose wants she had heard so much. She had even thought of becoming a deaconess, but her friends would not hear of it, and she had been obliged to submit herself to their conventional suburban life. "But here at last," she said, "I find my hands full and my heart also. These people welcome me so warmly and need so much, the whole day is filled with work for them; and now that you have come, Dr. Quin," she added, smiling at him, "I can do so much more, for you will tell me how to work under you and to nurse your patients back to health again."

It was almost dark when they came to the gate of Inagh, the house usually tenanted by the Resident Magistrate of the day, and here Louise Eden took leave of her new acquaintance, again giving him her hand in its little wet glove. The Doctor watched her as she ran lightly towards the house. She wore a grey hat and cloak, and the rough madder-dyed skirt of the peasant women of the district. None of the "young ladies" he had hitherto met would have deigned to appear in one of these fleecy crimson garments, so becoming to its present wearer. She turned and waved her hand at the corner of the drive, and the Doctor having gazed a moment longer into the grey mist that enshrouded her, went on his journey home.

His little house on the outskirts of Cloon had not many outward charms, being built in the inverted box style so usual in Ireland. A few bushes of aucuba and fuchsia scarcely claimed for the oblong space enclosed in front the name of a garden. But within he found

a cheerful turf fire, and his old housekeeper soon put a substantial meal on the table.

"Any callers to-day, Mamie?" he asked as he sat down.

"Not a one, sir, only two," was the reply. "The first was a neighbouring man from Killeen that was after giving himself a great cut with a reaping-hook where he was cutting a few thorns out of the hedge for to stop a gap where the cows did be coming into his oat-field. Sure I told him you wouldn't be in this long time, and he went to Cloran to bandage him up."

"And who was the other, Mamie?"

"The second first, sir, was a decent woman, Mrs. Cloherty, from Cranagh, with a sore eye she has where she was cuttin' potatoes and a bit flew up and hot it, and she's after going to the Friars at Loughrea to get a rub off the blessed cross, but it did no good after."

The old woman rambled on, but the Doctor gave her but a divided attention. He laughed and blushed a little presently to find himself gazing in the small round mirror that hung against the wall, his altitude of six feet just bringing his head to its level. The face that laughed and blushed back at him was a pleasant one: frank, blue eyes and a square brow surmounted by wavy fair hair were reflected, and the glad healthfulness of four-and-twenty years. He had been looked on as a "well-looking" man in his small social circle of Galway and Dublin, and had laughed and joked and danced with the girls he had met at merry gatherings, but without ever having given a preference in thought to one above another. Certainly no eyes had ever followed him into his solitude as the dark ones first seen to-day were doing.

He went out presently, the rain having ceased, and sauntered down the unattractive "Main Street" of Cloon.

The shops were shut, save those frequent ones which added the sale of liquor to that of more innocent commodities. In one a smart-looking schoolboy was reading the *Weekly Freeman* aloud to a group of frieze-coated hearers. At the door of another a ballad-singer was plaintively piping the "Mother's Farewell," with its practical refrain:—

> "Then write to me often, *and send me all you can*,
> And don't forget where'er you are that you're an Irishman."

The Doctor might at another time have joined and enlivened one of the listless groups standing about, but, after a moment or two of hesitation, he turned his back to them and walked in the direction of the gate of Inagh. "There's Mrs. Connell down there, that I ought to go and see; she's always complaining," he said to himself, in self-excuse. But having arrived at her cottage, he saw by a glance at the unshuttered window that his visit would be a work of supererogation, as she was busily engaged in carding wool by the fireside, the clear

light of the paraffin lamp, which without any intervening stage of candles had superseded her rushlight, showing her comely face to be hale and hearty.

Half unconsciously the young man passed on, crossed a stile and walked up a narrow, laurel-bordered path towards the light of another window which was drawing him, moth-like, by its gleam. It also, though in the "Removable's" house, was unshuttered, testifying to the peaceful state of the district. He could see a cheerful sitting-room, gay with flowers and chintzes, the light of a shaded lamp falling on Louise Eden's fair head, bent over a heavy volume on the table, an intrusive white kitten disputing her attention with it. He drew back, with a sudden sense of shame at having ventured so far, and hurried homewards to dream of the fair vision the day had brought him.

It was the beginning of an enchanted summer for the young Doctor. Day after day he met Miss Eden, at first by so-called accident; but soon their visits were pre-arranged to fall together at some poor cottage, where she told him he could bring healing or he told her she could bring help.

She had thrown herself with devotion into the tending of the poor. "I have wasted so many years at school," she would say, "just on learning accomplishments for myself alone; but now I have at last the chance of helping others I must make the most of it, especially as it is in my own dear Ireland."

"The lady" was soon well known amongst the neglected tenants of an estate in Chancery. Her self-imposed duties increased from day to day. The old dying man would take no food but from her hands. The Doctor found her at his house one evening. She had cut herself badly in trying to open a bottle for him, and was deadly pale. "I can't bear the sight of blood," she confessed, and fainted on the earthen floor. It was with gentle reverence that he carried her out and laid her on the cushions of his car, spread by the roadside; but the sweet consciousness of having for that one moment held her in his arms never left him when alone. In her presence her frank friendliness drove away all idle dreams and visions.

It was on a Sunday afternoon of September that Dr. Quin and Louise Eden met again sadly at the house where they had first seen each other, that of the Capels. They were called there by a sudden message that the poor girl Mary was dying, and before they could obey the summons she had passed away.

The little room was brighter now; a large-paned window, the gift of her ministering friend, let the light fall upon the closed eyes. At the foot of the bed hung a beautiful engraving of the Magdalen at the Saviour's feet, while a bunch of tea-roses in a glass still gave out their delicate fragrance. Neighbours were beginning to throng in, but gave place to "the lady." The old father silently greeted her and

wrung her offered hand, but moved away without speaking. The mother, staying her loud weeping, was less reserved.

"It's well you earned her indeed, miss," she said; "and she did be thinking of you always. The poor child, she was ill for near ten months, but I wouldn't begrudge minding her if it was for seven year. Sure I got her the best I could, the drop of new milk and a bit o' white bread and a grain o' tea in a while, and meself and the old man eatin' nothin' but stirabout, and on Christmas night we had but a herrin' for our dinner, not like some of the neighbours that do be scattering. Sure we never thought she was goin' till this morning, when she bid us send for the priest. And when she saw the old man crying, 'Father,' says she, 'don't fret. I'll soon be in Heaven praying for you with me own Laurence.' Sure she always said she'd die on the same day as him, and she didn't after—it was of a Saturday he died and this is a Sunday."

Louise and the Doctor looked up suddenly at each other. This was indeed the 13th of September, the day on which Laurence Capel had last year passed away.

They presently left the house of mourning, soon to become, by sad incongruity, a house of feasting, Louise leaving a little money for "the wake" in the old woman's hands. They walked towards home together, the Doctor leading his horse.

"I hope there is nothing wrong, Miss Eden," he asked after a little, noticing how abstracted and depressed she seemed.

"Yes," she answered; "I have had news that troubles me. My brother has written to tell me that he is going to marry the lady at whose house he has been staying in Yorkshire; and that, as she has a large property there, he will give up his Irish appointment. They offer me a home, and I am sure they would be very kind. But what troubles me is the thought of leaving Cloon, where I have learned to help the people and to love them. I can never settle into a dull, selfish, luxurious life again." Her eyes filled with tears as she spoke.

The young man's heart beat fast. Might he—might he dare to lay himself at her feet? He nervously played with the horse's mane and said tremulously, "We can never do without you now, Miss Eden. We should all be lost without you."

He paused and looked at her. She was gazing sadly at the distant blue outline of the Clare hills, and the sun sinking behind them flashed upon her tearful eyes. She was on the other side of the horse and a little in advance, and he could not, had he dared, have touched her hand. The words came out suddenly:

"We can never do without you here: I can never do without you. Will you stay with me? I haven't much to offer you: two hundred pounds a-year is all I am earning now, and I may soon get the hospital. I can't give you what you are used to; but if I had the whole world and its riches, it's to you I would bring them."

She had stopped now and listened to him, startled. Then she turned again, looked at the tranquil hills and the far-stretching woods of Inchguile, and the smoke curling from many a poor hearthstone. A vision flashed across her mind of a life spent here in the country she had learned to love, amongst the people she longed to succour, with for a helper the strong, skilful man who had stood with her by so many beds of sickness. Then she thought of what her future would be in a luxurious English household. She could see the well-regulated property, the tidy cottages, where squire and parson would permit her help, but not need it. An old woman looked from her doorway as they passed and said: "God speed ye! God bring ye safe home and to heaven!"

They had come to the high road now, and as they stopped to let a drove of cattle pass, she turned and met the Doctor's wistful eyes with a flash of enthusiasm in hers.

"I will stay," she said. "I will give my life to Cloon and its poor!"

Then, as they reached the stile which led into Inagh, she crossed it lightly and walked up the narrow path, scarcely remembering to look back before she was out of sight and wave her hand in farewell to her happy lover.

Happy was not, perhaps, the word to describe him by. A sudden rapture had swept over him, blinding his vision, when she had said, "I will stay." Yet now that she was out of sight without having deigned him one touch of her hand, one soft word, he felt as if all had been a dream; and was also conscious of a feeling, too subtle to be formed into a thought, that there was something wanting in this supreme moment which surely is not wanting when two hearts for the first time know themselves to be beating for each other. But she had always been such an object of worship to him, as one beyond his sphere, that he remembered how far away she had been from him but yesterday, and that doubtless the ordinary rules of love must be put aside when one so high stooped to crown the life of so unworthy a worshipper.

II.

Colonel Eden returned that evening, and for some days Louise was constantly occupied with his affairs, driving and walking with him and listening to his plans and projects, and thus giving up her own solitary expeditions and visits.

She was glad of the excuse to do this. The moment of exaltation in which she had resolved to devote her life to these poor Galway peasants had passed away, and though she kept pictures before her mind of a redeemed district, and children brought up in health and cleanliness instead of disease and dirt, and home industries taking the place of the idleness that followed spasmodic labour, misgivings entered with them as she saw herself no longer "the lady" who

stooped from a high level, but a mere doctor's wife (she would not admit even to her thoughts the undesirable title of "Mrs. Quin"), living in that small staring house at the entrance of the town. Of one thing she was certain, she could not possibly suggest such an idea to her brother. She could imagine too well his raised eyebrows and sarcastic words. She must wait until he had broken all ties with the neighbourhood, and then she could come back without consulting him. Her affianced husband's personality she kept as much as possible in the background. He was to be her fellow in good works, her superior in the skill and knowledge of a healer. She had only seen him during her ministrations to the poor, only talked with him of their needs and his own aspirations, had hardly looked on him as a being in whom she could take a personal interest, until that moment in the sunset when she had in the impulse of a moment linked her life to his.

A dread began to creep over her of seeing him again. How should she meet him? Could she still keep him at a fitting distance? Would he not feel that he had some claim upon her even now?

One morning, hearing wheels, she looked up from her half-hearted study of an Irish grammar and saw the well-known car and the bony grey horse appearing. To fly out by the back door, catching up her hat on the way was the work of a second. She ran down the laurel walk, crossed the stile, and was soon safely on her way to the Inchguile woods.

She was overtaken presently by a frieze-coated man, Martin Regan, who, though an Inchguile tenant and out of her usual beat, she had met once or twice, his bedridden father having sent to beg a visit from her. Their holding was a poor one enough, but by constant hard work the son had managed to keep things going. She knew the old woman who ruled in the house was his stepmother, but had not noticed any want of harmony in the family. Rumours, however, had reached her lately that the old man had been making a will, by which he left the farm and all his possessions to his wife, who had already written to recall her own son from America to share the expected legacy with her.

These rumours came back to the mind of Louise Eden as she noticed the trouble in Martin Regan's face.

"I was just going up to speak to your honour, miss," he said, "when I seen you going through the gate, so I followed you to tell of the trouble I'm in."

"Is what I have heard true, then?" asked Louise. "Surely your father could not be so unjust as to leave the farm you have worked on so hard away from you?"

"It's true indeed, miss," said Martin. "And I'm after going to the agent about it, for Sir Richard is away, and if he could hear of it—he's a good landlord and would never see me wronged. But he says all the power is gone from the landlord now, and that if the

old man was to leave the land to Parnell or another and away from all his own blood the law couldn't stop him. So God help us! I dunno at all what'll I do."

"Had you any quarrel with your father that led to this?" asked Louise, with sympathy that won the confidence of her companion, who had walked on with her to the woods, where their path was brilliantly bordered by the opaque red berries of the mountain ash, and the transparent hues of the guelder-rose.

"None at all," was the answer. "They made the will unknownst to me, and they have the little farm and the little stock, and all there is left to themselves, and for me nothing but the outside of the door and the workhouse."

"Do you think they threatened him or used force?" suggested the girl.

"Did they force him to do it, is it? They did not. But it's too much whisky and raisin cakes they had, and me coming into the house after selling a sick pig. I never heard word or sound about it till a neighbouring man told me they were gathered in the house with the priest, and looking for a witness, and I went in, and Peter Kane was in the house preparing to sign his name, and I took him by the neck and threw him out of the door, and the stepmother she took me by the skin of the shirt, and gave me a slap across the face with the flat of her hand, and I called Peter Kane to witness that she struck me, and he said he never saw it. And why? Because he had a cup of whisky given him before, and believe me, when he turned about, it smelled good! After that, no decent man could be found to sign his name, till they got two paid men. Sure there's schemers about that 'ud hang you up for half a glass of whisky."

"And who drew up the will?" inquired Miss Eden.

"The curate, Father Sheehy that did it. Sure our own priest would never have done it, but it was a strange curate from the County Mayo. And I asked him did he know there was such a one as me in the world, and he said he never did. Then yourself'll need forgiveness in heaven, Father, says I, as well as that silly old man."

"Could you not speak quietly to your father about it?" suggested Louise.

"Sure I never see the old man but when I go into the room in the morning to wipe my face with the little towel after washing it, and he don't speak to me himself, but to himself he do be speaking. And the old woman says to me, 'Go down now to your landlord and see what he can do for you;' and I said I will go, for if he was at home, there was never a bishop or a priest or a friar spoke better and honester words to me than his honour's self."

Martin Regan paused to take breath and wipe his mouth with his coat sleeve, and after a moment's abstracted gaze at the vista of tall fir trees before him, burst out again :

"And now it's whisky and tea for the old woman, and trimmings at two shillings the yard for the sister's dress, and what for Martin? what for the boy that worked for them the twelve months long? Me that used to go a mile beyond Cloon every morning to break stones, and to deal for two stone o' meal every Saturday to feed the childer when there was nothing in the field. And it's trying to drive me from the house now they are, and me to wet my own tea and to dress my own bed, and me after wringing my shirt twice, with respects to ye, after working all the day in the potato ridges."

"Could no one influence your stepmother; has she no friends here?" asked Louise, much moved.

Martin Regan laughed bitterly.

"Sure she never belonged to the estate at all," he said, "but came in the middle of the night on me and the little sister sitting by the little fire of bushes, and me with a little white coat on me. And we never knew where she came from, and never brought a penny nor a blanket nor a stitch of clothes with her, and our own mother brought seventy pounds and two feather beds. And now she's stiffer than a woman that would have a hundred pounds. And now the old man's like to die, and maybe he won't pass the night, and where'll I be? Sure if he would keep him living a little longer he might get repentance."

"Had you not better ask the Doctor to see him?" said Louise. "He might bring him round for a time, and then we must do our best for you."

"I was thinking that myself," said Regan; "and I believe I'd best go look for him now; I might chance to find him at home. I heard the old woman had the priest sent for; but, sure, he's wore out anointing him—he threatened to die so often. But he's worse now than ever I saw him." And taking off his hat with many expressions of gratitude, he left Louise to finish her walk alone.

An hour or two later she returned, her hands full of sprays and berries as an excuse for her wanderings. The Colonel was smoking contentedly on the bench outside the door.

"Ah, Louise," he said, "you have missed your friend the Doctor you were so full of when you wrote to me. He seemed to want to see you—I suppose to have a crack about some of your patients; so I asked him to come and dine this evening."

No escape now! Louise bit her lip, and proceeded to arrange her berries.

"He seems an intelligent young man," the Colonel went on; "rather good-looking, if he had a drill-sergeant to teach him to hold himself up; and I hear he doesn't drink, which can't often be said of these dispensary doctors."

The red deepened in the girl's face. How could she ever say, "This is the man I have promised to marry?" With much uneasiness she looked forward to dinner-time. Dr. Quin sent no apology;

nay, was worse than punctual. He came in rather shyly, looking awkward in a new and ill-fitting evening suit, for which he had put aside his usual rough homespun. Louise, furious with herself for having blushed as he appeared, gave him a cold and formal reception.

Dinner began uncomfortably for all three, as the Colonel, who had trusted to his sister to entertain their guest, found himself obliged to exert his own powers of conversation. The Doctor's discomfort was intensified by what seemed to one of his simple habits the unusual variety of courses and dishes. His fish-knife embarrassed him; he waited to use fork or spoon until he had watched to see which implement was preferred by his host. He chose "sherry wine" as a beverage; and left a portion of each viand on his plate, in the groundless fear that if he finished it he would be pressed to take a further supply. When dessert was at last on the table, he felt more at ease; his host's genial manner gave him confidence; and he was led on to talk of his work and prospects at Cloon, of the long drives over the "mountainy roads," and the often imaginary ailments of the patients who demanded his attendance, and their proneness when really ill to take the advice of priest or passer-by on sanitary matters rather than his own. "But I'll get out of it, I hope, some day," he said, looking at Louise; "when I get a few more paying patients and the infirmary, I can give up the dispensary."

Louise listened, dismayed. It was the thought of succouring the poor and destitute that had led her to make the resolve of marrying their physician; and he now dreamed of giving up his mission amongst them! He, poor lad, only thought for the moment of how he might best secure a home for his fair bride not too much out of harmony with her present surroundings.

"And are you pretty sure of the infirmary?" asked the Colonel with an appearance of warm interest.

"Well, I'm not rightly sure," was the answer. "I have a good deal of promises and everybody knows me, and the other man, Cloran, is no doctor at all—only took to it lately. Sure his shop in Cloon isn't for medicine at all, but for carrot-seed and turnip-seed and every description of article. But there's bribery begun already; and yesterday, Mr. Stratton asked one of the Guardians to keep his vote for me, and says he, 'how can I when I have the other man's money in my pocket?'"

"And where did you learn doctoring?" asked the Colonel.

"Well, I walked St. James' Hospital in Dublin three years; and before that I was in the Queen's College, Galway, where I went after leaving the National School in Killymer."

"Were you well taught there?" inquired his host.

"I was indeed. I learned a great deal of geography and arithmetic. There's no history taught at all though, nor grammar. But you' wonder how good the master was at mathematics, and he nothing to

look at at all. His name was Shee," went on the Doctor, now quite over his shyness; "and he was terrible fond of roast potatoes. I remember he used to put them in the grate to roast and take them out with two sticks, for in those days there were no tongs; and one day I brought four round stones in my pocket and put them in the grate as if they were potatoes to roast for myself. By-and-by, he went over and took the stick and raked out one of them, and took it up in his hand and rubbed it on his trousers (so) to clean it, and not a tint of skin was left on his hand. And I out of the door and he after me, and I never dared go to the school again till my grandfather went before me to make peace."

The Colonel laughed heartily and was proceeding further to draw out his ingenuous guest, but Louise, visibly impatient, rose to leave the room. She was chafing with shame and mortification. Had she ever thought of becoming the wife of that man with his awkward manners and Connaught brogue? Certainly she had never realised what it meant. She could never look her brother in the face again if the idea of the engagement should dawn on him. How could she escape it? Carry it out she could not. All her enthusiastic wish to spend her life in making this poor district better was now overshadowed by the unendurable thought of what her promise entailed.

Presently the Doctor came in alone, Colonel Eden having gone to write a letter he wished to send by late post. He came forward at first gladly, then timidly, repelled by the girl's cold expression as she stood by the fire in her long white dress. She felt that her only chance of avoiding dangerous topics was in plunging into the subject of their mutual patients.

"Did Regan find you in time to bring you to his father?" she asked.

"He found me," said the Doctor; "but I told him I couldn't come before to-morrow as I was to dine here. I thought there was no occasion for hurry."

"But did he tell you how much depends on his father's life?" said Louise, unconsciously glad to find something definite at which she might show displeasure. "Do you not know of the unjust will he has made, and that if he dies now his son will be disinherited?"

"He was telling me about it, but there's no danger of his dying yet awhile," answered the Doctor, unaware of the gathering storm. "That old man has a habit of dying; he was often like that before."

"I thought it was your duty to go at once when you are told there is urgent necessity," said Louise, with heightened colour; "and until now I thought it was your pleasure also."

"I'd have gone quick enough, Miss Eden, if I'd known *you* were so anxious about it," was the rather unfortunate reply; "and I'll go now this minute if you wish me to."

"My wishes are not in question," said the girl, yielding to the

irritation she felt against herself and against him; "but if you neglect the call of the dying on such a trivial plea as a dinner invitation, I do not think you are justified in holding the position you do."

Colonel Eden at this moment came in, and the Doctor, feeling he had given offence, but rather puzzled as to the cause, asked at once that his car might be ordered, as he had to go and see a patient some way off.

"So late, and on such a dark night!" said the Colonel, good-naturedly; "surely he could wait till to-morrow. Don't you think so, Louise?"

"I have no opinion to give on the matter," said his sister, coldly.

She was now really vexed by the young man's quick obedience to what he interpreted to be her wish. He had no sooner taken leave than she went to her room and burst into sobs of mortified pride and real perplexity.

A day or two passed by during which she stayed in the house and garden. The Colonel was away, doing duty for some fellow "Removable" absent on leave. On his return he told his sister that he had found a letter awaiting him calling for his immediate return to Yorkshire on business connected with settlements.

"I must go the day after to-morrow," he said; "and would it not be a good plan, Louise, for you to come with me and make friends with Agnes?"

A light flashed in the girl's eyes. Was not this a way of escape for her? Oh, that she might leave Cloon while no one knew of the momentary folly that now she blushed to remember!

She quickly assented, and next morning began to make her preparations. She knew, though she would not confess to the knowledge, that she was saying good-bye for ever to Inagh, the bright little home where she had been so happy; but a thought of changing her resolution never crossed her mind. She still nervously dreaded a visit from the man she was conscious she was about to wound cruelly, and in the afternoon, hearing wheels, was relieved to see only her brother driving up. He had called for a cup of tea, having to drive on and wind up some business at another village in his jurisdiction.

"I was sorry to hear of Dr. Quin's accident," he said as he waited. "I hope it is not so serious as they say."

"What accident?" asked Louise, startled.

"Oh, did you not hear that the night he dined here he went on up that narrow road to Ranahasey to see some old man, and in the dark he was thrown off his car and the wheel went over him? They brought him back to Cloon on the car; which was a mistake, and must have caused him agony. Dr. Cloran, his rival, is looking after him, and seems rather puzzled about the case, and says if he is not better to-morrow he will send to Limerick for further advice. I am very sorry, for he seemed an intelligent, good-hearted young fellow."

Louise remained alone, sick at heart. What had she done?

Had she brought upon this poor lad, in return for his worship of her, actual bodily injury even before the keener pain that was to follow?

The dignified letter of dismissal and farewell she had been meditating all day became suddenly inadequate. She must ask his pardon and break to him very gently the hard sentence of renunciation and separation. Keen remorse took hold of her as she remembered his gentle ways with the sick and suffering, his strength and wisdom, when fighting against disease and death. Oh that she had never come across his path, or that she had had a mother or friend to warn her of the dangerous precipice to which she was unconsciously leading him. What could she do now? She could not write to him, not knowing into what hands the letter might fall. She could not leave him to hear by chance next day of her departure. It was growing dark, and there was no time to lose. She would go to his house, and at all events leave a message for him. It was hardly a mile away, and she was not likely to meet anyone on the road.

The low terraced hills looked bleak and dreary, a watery sky above them. The pale sunset gleams were reflected in the pools of water on the roadside, not yet absorbed into the light limestone soil. The straggling one-sided street forming the entrance to Cloon looked more squalid than usual, the houses more wretched under their grass-grown thatch, the gleam and ring from the smithy the only touch of light and sound that relieved their gloom.

Louise Eden walked up the little path to the Doctor's house, and, knocking at the door, asked the old woman who appeared for news of her master.

"Indeed, he's the one way always," was the reply; "no better and no worse since they brought him and laid him on the bed. You'd pity him to see him lying there, me fine boy."

"Will you give him a message from me?" asked Louise. "Will you say I have come to ask how he is, and to say good-bye, as I am going back to England?"

"He'll be sorry for that, indeed," said the old woman. "Sure, you'd best go up and see him yourself."

"Oh, no," said Louise, shrinking back, "unless—his life is not in danger, I hope?"

"Danger, is it," echoed old Mamie, indignantly, though not without a momentary glance of uneasiness. "Why would he be in danger? Sure he wasn't so much hurted as that. He bled hardly at all only for a little cut on the head, and sure he has all he wants, and a nurse coming from Dublin and one of the nuns sitting with him now. It'd be a bad job if he was in danger, only twenty-four year old, and having such a nice way of living, and, indeed, he has the prayers of the poor. Go up the stairs and see him—here's his reverence coming, and might want me," she continued, as a car stopped at the gate.

Reluctantly, yet not knowing how to draw back, and unwilling to

meet the priest, whom she knew slightly, Louise went up the narrow staircase. She knocked at a door standing ajar, and hearing a low "come in," entered. It was a small bare room enough, no carpet save one narrow strip, whitened walls, and a great fire smouldering under the chimney-board of black painted wood. Even at that first glance she noticed that the only attempt at ornament was a vase containing a bunch of the red-seeded wild iris; she remembered having gathered and given it to the Doctor a little time before as a "yerb" sometimes in request amongst his patients.

The fading light fell on the low iron bed upon which the young man lay, propped up with pillows. His face was much altered by these two or three days of suffering. The fair hair was covered by a bandage and the blue eyes looked larger for the black shades beneath them. But as he saw who his visitor was, a smile, very sweet and radiant, lighted them up, and a little colour came into the pallid cheeks. A nun, dressed in black and with a heavily-veiled bonnet half concealing her face, sat by his bedside, and looked with curiosity at the girl as she came in and gave her hand to the patient.

"I have come to ask how you are," she said, "and to tell you how very sorry I am—we are—for your accident. I am doubly grieved because——" and she stopped, embarrassed at having to speak before a third person. The Doctor's eyes were fixed on her face with the same glad smile.

"*I* wanted to see you," he said gently, "but I never thought you would come to this poor place. I wanted to tell you I had seen old Regan before I was hurt, and I did my best for him, and I think he won't die yet awhile."

"I am sorry," began Louise again, and then hesitated. How could she explain for how much she was sorry? How could she at this moment make any explanation at all? "I am going away," she went on—"I am going to England with my brother to-morrow. I have come to say good-bye."

The eyes that rested on her lost none of their glad look of content; she was not sure if her words had been understood, and went on talking rather hurriedly of her brother's arrangements, and who was to take his place, and of the long journey to Yorkshire.

"And now I must go," she concluded, "for I have a good deal to do at home."

The hand which lay on the counterpane sought a little packet beside the pillow.

"This was for you," he said, handing it to her.

She said good-bye again, and went slowly away; but, turning at the door, she was filled once more with keen remorse at the sight of the strong frame laid low, and the glance that followed her was so full of wistfulness that she felt that she would have stooped and, in asking forgiveness, have kissed the white-bandaged brow, if it had not been for the nun's silent presence.

It was not until late at night that she remembered and opened the little packet. It contained a massive marriage ring, such as were used by the fisher-folk on the Galway coast. She was troubled at seeing it. The strong-clasped hands and golden heart were an emblem that vexed her. She felt that while she kept it she could not be free from the promise she had given, and that her farewell could not have been understood as a final one. She determined to leave it at the Doctor's house as she passed to-morrow, and wrote, to enclose with it, a letter, penitent, humble, begging forgiveness for the wrong she had thoughtlessly done to so good and loyal a friend. She did not care now if others read it; she must confess her desertion and implore pardon. The letter was blotted with tears as she folded it round the heavy ring.

But that ring of betrothal was never returned. In the morning, as Colonel Eden and his sister drove for the last time into Cloon, they saw groups of frieze-coated men and blue-cloaked women whispering together with sad faces, and a shutter being closed over each little shop window.

And when they came to the Doctor's house they saw that the blinds were all drawn down.

SONNET.

Our life is one long poem. In our youth
We rise and sing a noble epic song,
A trumpet note of sound both clear and strong,
With idyls now and then too sweet for truth.
A lyric of lament, it swells along
The tide of years, a protest 'gainst the wrong
Of life, an unavailing cry for ruth,
A wish to know the end—the end forsooth!
'Tis not on earth. The end which makes or mars
The song of life, we who sing seldom know.
That end is where, beyond the pale fair stars
Which have looked down so calmly on our woe,
Eternal music will set right the jars
Of all that sounds so harsh and sad below.

Julia Kavanagh.

THE BRETONS AT HOME.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "In Sunny Climes," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.

Fishwomen, Brittany.

WE were very sorry to leave Morlaix. The old town had gained upon our affections. We had found the Hôtel d'Europe very comfortable, and Mr. and Mrs. Hellard kind and attentive beyond praise. The indiscretions of that fatal night were more than effaced and forgotten. Morlaix, at the time of the Fair, was a Pandemonium: at the Regatta, if not exactly Paradise, it was at least very lively and amusing; whilst, when neither Fair nor Regatta was in question, Morlaix was full of the charm of repose; a sleepy atmosphere that accorded well with its old-world outlines.

Not least was our regret at saying good-bye to Catherine. She was an original character, who had much amused and entertained us. There was a vein of humour in her composition which the slightest touch brought to the surface. The solemnity of her features never relaxed, and whilst she made others laugh, and laugh again, her own face would invariably be grave as a judge's. It was also a pleasure—in these days of incapacity—to meet with a woman who managed the affairs of her little world with all the discretion of a Prime Minister.

"Ces messieurs are going to Quimper," she exclaimed that last morning. We were alone in the dining-room, taking an early breakfast. Our small side-table faced the end window, and we looked upon the old square, and the canal, where a long row of women were already washing, beating, rinsing their linen, their white caps conspicuous, their voices raised in laughter that rippled down the troubled waters. It was a lively scene; very picturesque; very suited to the old town.

"Ces messieurs are going to Quimper," said Catherine, speaking the name in the very italics of scorn. "They would do much better to remain in Morlaix, where at least there is a good hotel, and a Catherine who is ready to serve them night and day. But human nature is curious and must see everything. One house is like another; one street like another; the sea coast is the same everywhere; the same water, the same air, the same sky; but just because one shore is a bay and the other a point, because one coast is flat and the other has cliffs, mankind must rush about and call it seeing the world."

"Would you have us stay here for ever?" we asked, amused at Catherine's idea of life and travel.

"Well, no," she acknowledged; "I suppose not. It would hardly do. Morlaix, after all, is not exciting. Only I am sorry you are going, and it makes me unjust to the rest of the world," she acknowledged. "We shall have a quiet time all this week, and I could have served you better than I did last. But I don't like Quimper. There is not a decent hotel in the place, and I wouldn't live there for a hundred francs a week. I cannot breathe there; I grow limp. It has a dreadful river right in front of the hotels—you will have benefit. I have heard that there are seventy-two separate smells in Cologne—in Quimper the seventy-two are concentrated into one."

This was not encouraging; but we knew that as Catherine's strong nature saw things in extremes, so her opinions had to be taken cum grano salis. In spite of what she said, we departed with much hope and expectation.

Everyone assisted in seeing us off the premises. They declared it to be a melancholy pleasure, a statement hard to reconcile with their beaming faces. Catherine alone was grave and immovable as the Man with the Iron Mask. Yet she actually presented us—this downright, determined, apparently unromantic woman—with button-holes of small white roses tied up with white ribbon: ribbon that in our grandmothers' days, I believe, was called *love* ribbon.

"We shall look quite bridal," we said, as she placed them in the destined receptacle next our hearts. "Catherine, why have you never married?"

Catherine laughed. "Thereby hangs a tale," she replied, actually blushing. "It has not been for want of offers, you may be sure; I might have married twenty times over had I so wished." And so we gathered that Catherine, too, had had her little romance. Perhaps it had helped to form her character, and develop her capacities. "And now, be sure that some day you come back to Morlaix," she added, as she finally accomplished her delicate task to her satisfaction.

"Shall we find you here?" we asked. "You may have married and gone away."

"To toil and slave like Madame Mirmiton!" cried Catherine. "I would not marry if it was the President of the Republic, or even the

Marquis de Carabas. Besides, who would have me at my age? No, no! I know when I am well off. Men, do you see, are not angels; they are much nearer allied to the opposite, sauf votre respect! Of course, *gentlemen*, I admit, *are* angels—sometimes. But then, no gentleman would have me. No; I am a fixture, here, every bit as much as the doors and the windows. Monsieur and Madame and the hotel would go to ruin without me."

And, although Monsieur and Madame assisted at this conference, Catherine's statement went uncontradicted. She was certainly their right hand, and added no little to the popularity of the establishment.

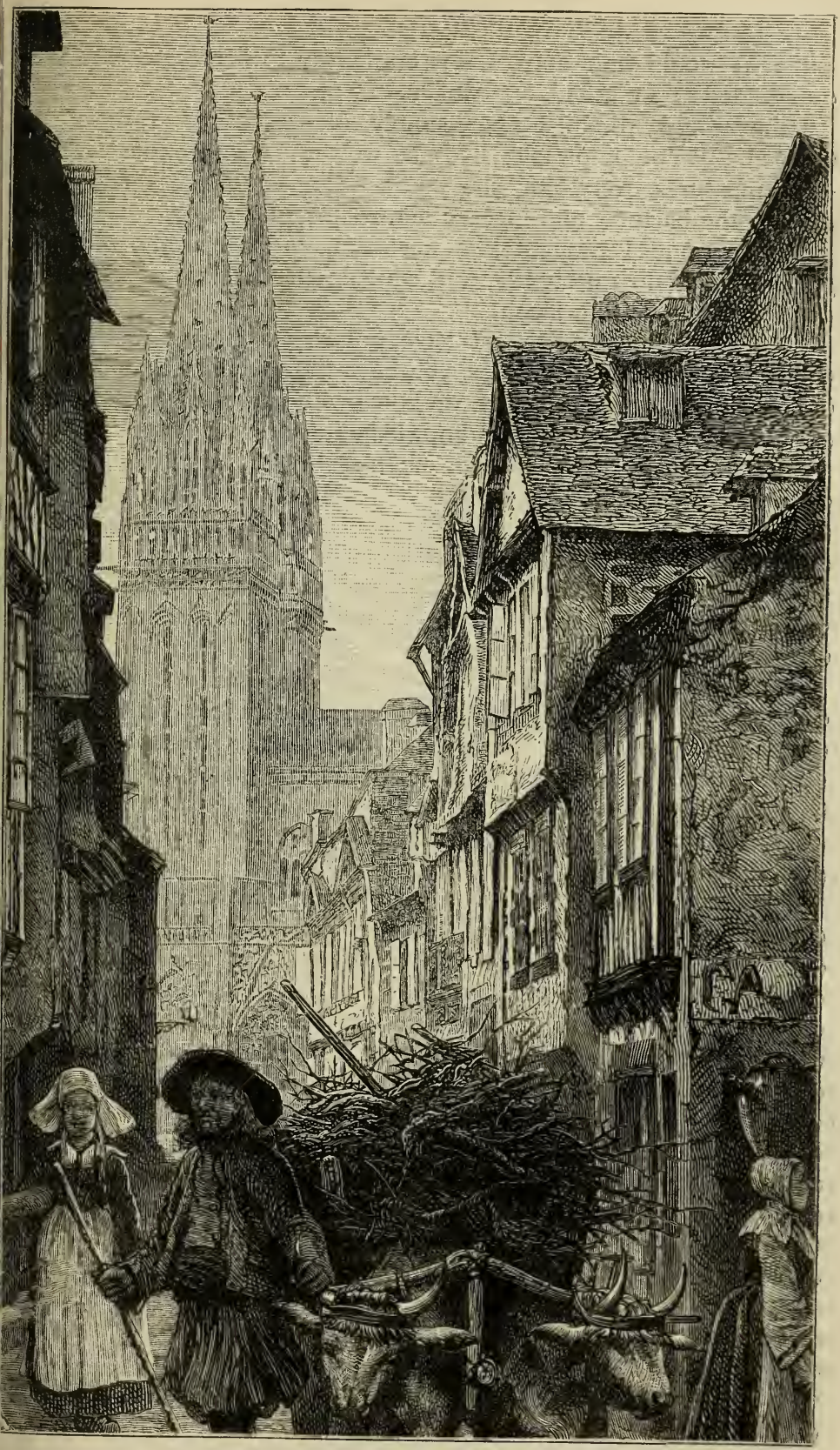
Finally we were off. The omnibus took our traps, whilst we walked up Jacob's Ladder. We let our gaze linger and rest upon all the old familiar points; the quaint gables, the dormer windows in the red, red roofs; the latticed panes, behind which life must seem less sad and sorrowful than it really is; the antiquarian and his old curiosities. He knew we were leaving, and was on the look-out for us. The pale, spiritual face stood out conspicuously amidst its surroundings: the spiritual strangely contrasting with the material. The eyes looked into ours with their sad, dreamy, far-away gaze, so full of the pain and suffering of life. Behind him stood his Adonis of a son, the flush of genius making the countenance yet more beautiful. Perched on his shoulder was the cherub. He held out his arms as soon as he saw us, and seemed quite ready to go forth with us and, as Catherine would have said, see the world. Some of the old Louis Quatorze furniture had been transferred from the seclusion of the monastery to the glitter of the outer world, and here found a temporary repose.

"You are leaving," said the old antiquarian sadly—but his tones were always sad. "I am sorry. I am always sorry when anyone leaves who possesses the true artistic temperament. The town feels more deserted. There are so many things around us that appeal only to the few. But you have made quite a long stay amongst us; people generally come one day and depart the next. And now you are bound for Quimper?"

"Yes. What shall we find there?"

"Much that is interesting; the loveliest church in Brittany; many quaint and curious houses and perspectives; some things that are better than Morlaix, but nothing better than our Grande Rue. Brittany has nothing better than that in its way; nothing so good. Du reste, comparisons should never be made. But you will find few antiquities in Quimper—and no old antiquarian," he added with a quiet smile.

"I am under the impression," said H. C., a sensitive flush mantling to his poetical and expressive eyes, "that some of these good people are mistaking us for dealers in curiosities, and fancy that this is our object in travelling."



QUIMPER.

"What would your aunt, Lady Maria, say to her nephew's being so degraded?" we asked.

"She would diminish her supply of crystallised violets," he returned. "You know she lives by weight—Apothecaries' Weight—and measures everything she takes. She would put a few grains less into the balance, and incense her rooms."

All the same, I thought him mistaken, and asked the old antiquarian the plain question. He smiled; the nearest approach we ever saw him give to a laugh.

"No, sirs," he replied; "I have not so far erred. We do not make those mistakes. Besides, you have too much love and veneration for the beautiful. Indeed we know with whom we have to deal, and in our little way possess a knowledge of the world."

But time and tide wait for no man. Our hour was up; the omnibus had rumbled past us, and we had to depart. We reluctantly turned away from this interesting group. The rift within the lute was probably busy with household matters above, and no discordant element marred our farewell. But we were sad, for we felt that somehow here was being lost and wasted a great deal of that true talent which is so rare in the world.

The train rolled away from Morlaix. We had a long journey before us; a journey right through the heart of Finistère. The first portion of it as far as Landerneau had already been taken; the remainder was new ground. The trains are slow and lingering in Brittany; this goes without saying, and has already been said; but patience was an easy virtue. In spite of Catherine, new ground must always be interesting.

The guard had put us into a compartment at Morlaix containing two people; a young bride and bridegroom or an engaged couple; we could not be quite sure at which stage they had arrived. The train was almost in motion and we had no time to change. The gentleman glared at us, and we felt very uncomfortably in the way. At the next station we left and went into the next compartment, which contained nothing but a priest reading his breviary; a dignified ecclesiastic; proving once more that there is only one step from the ridiculous to the sublime. We carefully removed all our small traps, including H. C.'s numerous antique parcels. But he forgot his umbrella, which he had placed up in the rack. A dreadful umbrella, which had been a martyrdom to me ever since we had left England. An umbrella that was only fit for a poet or a Mrs. Gamp; huge, bulky, tied round like a lettuce, with half a yard of stick above the material, and a crane's head for a handle with a perpetual grin upon it that was terribly irritating. H. C. called it one of his antiquities, and was proud of it. When he had first bought it he had offered it to his aunt, Lady Maria, for a carriage sunshade, who straightway went off into one of her fainting fits, and very nearly disinherited him. At Quimper I could stand it no longer, and when his back

was turned, I quietly put it up the chimney. There it no doubt still remains, unless it has suffered martyrdom in the flames, in return for the martyrdom it had inflicted upon others. But I am dating forward.

This horrible apparition he left in the rack of the first compartment. I saw the omission, and was delighted to think that we had at last got rid of the encumbrance. Had I only remembered the tale of the Eastern Slippers I might have taken warning. The train went off; he took a sketch of the priest, and then hastily looked round.

"My umbrella!" he exclaimed in an agony. "Where is it? You have not thrown it out of window?"

My will had been good to do it many a time, as the familiar saying runs; but he carried a stick as well as an umbrella, and he was five times as strong as I.

"You may have left it at Morlaix," I suggested. "Now I come to think of it ——"

"The next compartment," he interrupted. "I distinctly remember putting it up in the rack, and thinking how quaint and pretty the crane's head looked as it gaped through the netting."

It is always so. The fateful crossness of events pursues us through the world. The only time when he should have been absent-minded and oblivious, his memory served him well. At the next station he got out for his umbrella, and returned after quite a long interval, not looking exactly triumphant; rather flushed and uncomfortable; but in proud possession of the horror.

"I had quite a difficulty in getting it back," he said. "They had actually put it up and were sitting under its shade. He complained of the glare of the sunshine. You see, although these are first-class compartments, there are no blinds to the windows. So very public."

"But the morning is grey," I observed. "There is no sunshine."

H. C. looked out; he had not observed the absence of sunlight.

"Oh, well," he returned, doubtfully, "perhaps it was the draught they complained of. You know I am rather dull at French, and have to make a shot at a good deal that's said. Any way," he added, with a frank look of innocence, "I am sure they are only an engaged couple, not married. Married people wouldn't sit in a railway carriage under one umbrella. She's very pretty—I wonder whether she's very fond of him? It looks like it. One compartment—one umbrella. It was *my* umbrella—then *I* ought to have had his place," he added dreamily, as if in some way or other he felt that something was wrong and the world was a little out of joint.

The priest looked up from his breviary. I should have thought he understood English, only that his expression was rather comical than reproving. I changed the subject and asked him a question. He immediately closed his book and disposed himself for conversation We found him an extremely intellectual and entertaining companion He intimately knew both Brittany and the Breton character.

"I am not a Breton," he said in reply to a remark, "but I have lived amongst them for thirty years. My early days were passed in Paris, and to live in Paris up to the age of twenty-one is alone an education. My father was X——, the great minister of his time. My grandfather went through all the horrors of the French Revolution. He saw the beautiful head of Marie Antoinette roll into the sawdust; heard the last footfall of Charlotte Corday as she ascended the scaffold. He always said that she was one of our most heroic martyrs, and as she walked patiently and full of courage to her doom, the expression of a saint upon her features. She was a saint, more worthy of canonisation than some who are found in the calendar. He was a young man in those days, but its horrors turned his hair white. Later on he was of great assistance to Napoleon, although we have always been Royalists. But he held that it was well to sacrifice private opinion for the good of one's country. It is of no use fighting against the stream. Life is short, the present only is ours; therefore why waste the present in vainly wishing for what is not?"

"And you have chosen neither sword nor portfolio?" we observed.

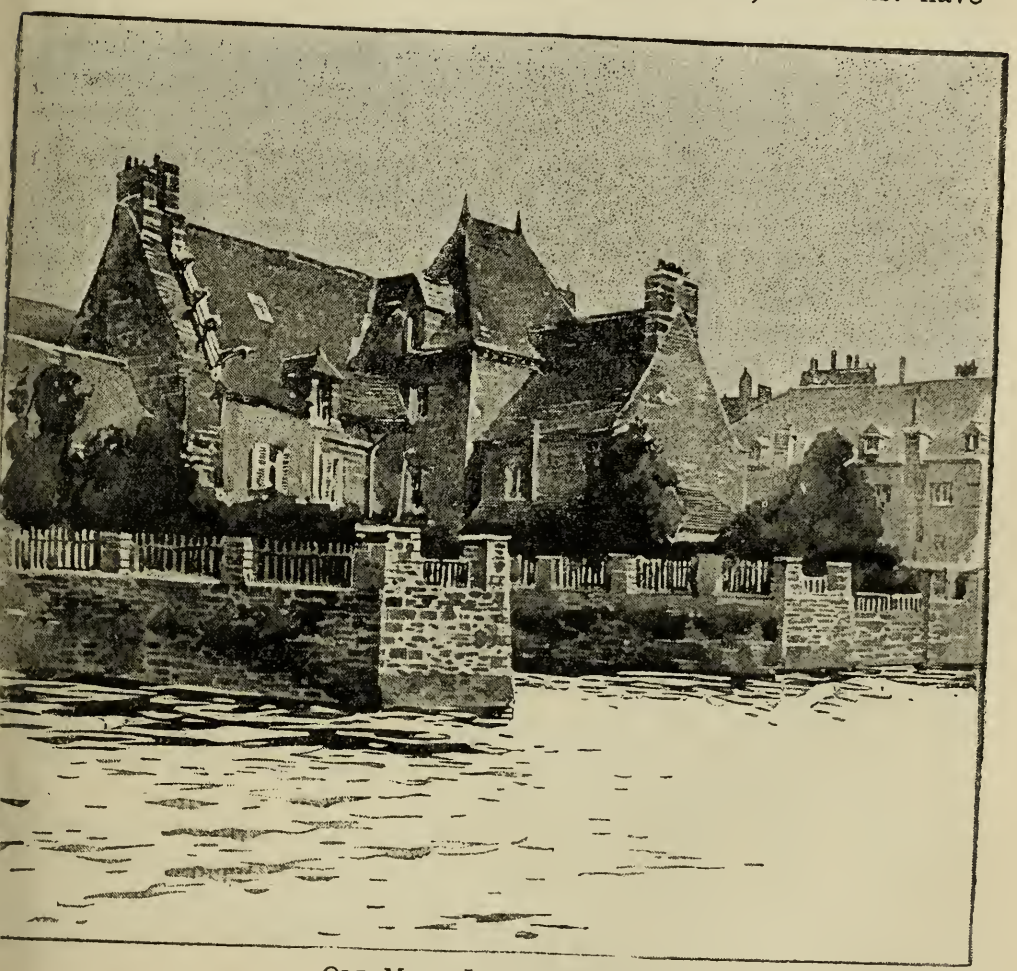
"'The lot is cast into the lap,'" he quoted. "I was to have been a soldier, but just at that moment my sight failed. I was threatened with blindness. Fortunately it passed off with time, and I now see better than I did at twenty. But my career as a soldier was ended. I had no taste for politics—the world is not sufficiently honest. It seems to me a constant struggling for party and power rather than an earnest union of hearts and minds to do one's very best for King and country, avienne que pourra. And as extremes meet in human nature just as they sometimes meet in the physical world, so I, throwing aside the sword, took to the cowl. Yes; I withdrew from the world; I entered a monastery; the severe order of the Trappists. But I made a mistake—I did not know myself. A life of seclusion, of inactivity, could never be mine. I should have become demoralised. Half the men who enter monasteries make the same mistake, but they have not the courage to withdraw. I went back into the world before my novitiate was six months over. Not to forsake religion, but to enter the Church."

"We have heard of you as a great preacher," we remarked.

"I believe that it is my vocation," he returned with a smile which quite illumined his face. "Heaven has bestowed upon me the gift of sympathy; I have influence with my fellow mortals—Heaven grant that I use it well. I first touch their hearts, then I have gained their minds. This is especially necessary with the good Breton folk. They are fervently religious, but not intellectual. They are sterling, but narrow-minded and superstitious. Nor did I choose my sphere of action; it was placed before me and I accepted it. I would rather have preached to Parisian congregations, the refined and cultivated of the earth; but I should probably not have done more good—if I have done good at all—and it might have been a

snare to me. I might have grown worldly; intellectually proud; too fond of the good things of this life at the tables of the rich and great. All that is not possible in Brittany. With us, more or less, it is Lent all the year round, intellectually as well as physically. We need very few indulgences from his Holiness."

There was something extremely winning about him. It must have been the charm of character, for he had long passed the charm of youth. His hair, worn long, was white as snow; he must have



OLD MILL, LANDERNEAU.

been verging upon sixty. His face was pale and very pure in expression; his eyes were large, dark, and singularly soft and luminous, without a trace of age about them, or of their early weakness. He was tall and powerfully made, and a tendency to embonpoint only added to his dignity and importance. He had a fund of quiet humour about him also, which made him an excellent companion.

"We should much like to hear you preach," we said. "Is there no chance of our doing so?"

"I am bound for Quimper," he returned; "so are you. Next

Sunday I shall preach in the cathedral, and if you are still there your wish may easily be gratified."

"We are Protestant," I remarked. "You will look upon us as a heretic."

"Indeed, no," he returned quickly. "I am not so narrow-minded as some of my cloth. One is of Paul, another of Cephas. I would not even try to convert you, though I am aware that my Church demands it. But to a certain extent man must be a free agent and judge for himself. I do not hold with my Church in all things. We are all bound for the same goal, just as two rivers flowing from opposite directions may empty themselves into one sea. All roads lead to Rome—it would be sad if only one road led to Heaven."

Thus the hours passed swiftly and pleasantly. The country on either side was diversified and interesting. Occasionally a river, flowing to the sea, reflected the sky and clouds above, giving poetry to the landscape. Now hills and gently sloping undulations, here rocky and barren, there fringed with trees whose graceful curves and branches were traced against the pale background of sky. Again there were long stretches of plain, dreary and monotonous, sad and sombre, like the Breton character.

The peasantry, indeed, are much influenced by their climate, by the sad aspect of the long reaches of field and plain that so often meet their gaze, unbroken perhaps by any other object than a cross or calvary erected under religious influence in days gone by. And these very crosses, beautiful in themselves, have a saddening tendency, reminding them constantly of the fact that here they have "no continuing city." These wide reaches, artistically, are full of tone and beauty, but here again they are at fault. They know nothing of "tone," of "greys and greens;" they only know that the general influence is melancholy; that the sun shines too seldom in their skies, and that those skies too often weep. They cannot argue and analyse; cannot tell why the tendency of their nature, individually and collectively, is grave and sombre; reasoning is beyond them, and if they think of it at all, they arrive at the truth by instinct. For instinct takes the place of reason, and gradually dies out as the higher powers of the intellect are developed.

They stood out here and there in the fields, few and far between, very picturesque objects; something sad and patient in their very attitudes. But it was not the time for ploughing and seed-sowing, when they are seen to greatest advantage; for what is more picturesque than a peasant following a plough drawn by the patient oxen, who are never, like so many of the men and women of the world, "unequally yoked together." Here and there a woman would be kneeling in the fields, her favourite attitude when minding cattle; kneeling and knitting; there they stay from sunrise to sunset, their mind a blank; vegetating; expecting nothing better from

life; untroubled by the mysterious problems that disturb and perplex so many of us; in very many ways so much to be envied; escaping the heritage of those more richly endowed: the mental and spiritual pain and oppression of existence.

The day passed on and we approached Quimper. We thought of Catherine and wondered what we should find awaiting us. Much, according to her, that would be better avoided. But as we drew near to the ancient town and saw, rising heavenwards, the beautiful spires of her cathedral, standing out in the romantic gloaming as an architectural dream against the background of sky, we felt that here would be our reward, come what else might. The train steamed into the station; our day's journey was over. We must now part from our pleasant travelling companion.

"I hope not for ever," he said, as he bared his head on the platform, according to the polite custom of his country. "We have some things in common; we see much from the same point of view; accident made me a Frenchman and a priest, and I would not have it otherwise; but I think that I could also have been very happy as an Englishman and a member of your Church. Here I think that we meet half-way; for if I find myself so much in touch with an Englishman, you seem to me in still closer union with the French nature."

Then he gave us his card and asked us if we would go and see him.

"Do not be afraid," he laughed; "I will not try to convert you —pervert, you would call it. I think we are both too broad-minded to meddle with things that do not concern us. Here, I am the guest of the Bishop, but he is absent, and will only return the day before my departure. It is a pity, for he would charm you by many delightful qualities, though he may not be quite so tolerant as I."

We parted with an understanding that it was to meet again, and went our different ways. We consigned our traps to the omnibus, H. C. for once trusting his precious treasures out of sight, but retaining his umbrella with all the determination of an inquisitor inflicting torture upon a fellow mortal. A short avenue brought us to the river, which flowed through the town, and, not without reason, had been condemned by Catherine. We crossed the bridge and went down the quay. It was lined with trees, and in fine weather is rather a pleasant walk. The chief hotels of the town are centred here, and some of the principal shops and cafés. It is fairly bustling and lively, but not romantic.

We had been recommended to the Hôtel de l'Epée as the best in Quimper, and soon found ourselves entering its wide portals; a huge porte-cochère that swallowed up at a single mouthful the omnibus and the piled-up luggage that had quickly followed us from the station.

Ostlers and landlord immediately came forward with ladders and other attentions, and we were soon domiciled.

It was a rambling old inn, with winding staircases, dark and dirty, and guiltless of carpet. The walls might have been painted at the beginning of the century, but hardly since. "In fact," said H. C. "they look quite mediæval." There were passages long and gloomy, in which we lost ourselves. Ancient windows let in any amount of draught and rain, and would have been the despair of old maids. But we were given a large room, the very essence of neatness, and beds adorned with spotless linen. A chambermaid waited upon us, dressed in a Breton cap that was wonderfully picturesque, and made us feel more in Brittany than ever. She had long passed her youth, but possessed a frank and expressive face, and was superior to most of the hotel servants. In early life she had lived with a noble family, and had travelled with them for many years. She had seen something of the world.

Our windows looked on to the back of the hotel, in comparison with which the front was tame and commonplace. Below us we saw an accumulation of gables and angles; a perfect sea of wonderful red roofs, with all the beauty and colouring of age. Some of them possessed dormer windows, that just now reflected the after-glow of sunset; small dormer windows high up in the slanting roofs that perhaps had reflected the changes of light and shade, and day and night, for centuries. Here and there we traced picturesque courtyards and gardens that were small oases of green in this wilderness of red-roofed buildings. On the one side flowed the second river of Quimper, on the other, like a celestial vision, rose the wonderful cathedral. A dream, a vision of Paradise, it did indeed look in this fast falling twilight. The towers, crowned by their graceful spires, rose majestically above this sea of houses. Beyond, one traced the outlines of pinnacle and flying buttress, slanting roof and beautiful windows.

We were just in time for table d'hôte, and groped our way down the dark, winding stairs. The way to the dining-room lay through the bureau, where Madame sat in state at her desk, entertaining a select party of friends, who had evidently called in upon her for a little scandal and conversation. She was a tall, majestic woman, with a loud voice, and apparently a long life before her; but at a second visit we paid Quimper not long after, she, too, had passed into the regions that lie "beyond the veil."

The dining-room was long and large and crowded. Most of the people at table were evidently commercial travellers, and more or less habitués of the place. All the women who served wore those wonderful Brittany caps, and quite redeemed the room from its common-place elements.

The shades of night had quite fallen upon the old town when we went out to reconnoitre. It would only be possible to gain a faint and scarcely true impression of what the town was like. At night, new things often look old, and old new, outlines are magnified, and

general effects are altogether lost. The river ran down the quay like a dark and sluggish thread; there was no poetry or romance about it. The banks were built up with granite, which made it look more like a canal than a river. To be at all picturesque it wanted the addition of boats and barges, of which just now it was free and void. The trees whispered in the night breeze. On the opposite bank, covering a large space, a fair was holding its revelry; a small pandemonium; shows were lighted up with flaring gas, and houris in spangles danced and threw out their fascinations. Big drums and trumpets made night hideous. The high cliffs beyond served as a sort of sounding-board, so that nothing was lost.

BRITTANY PEASANT.

We turned away and soon found ourselves in the cathedral square. Before us rose the great building in all its majesty, distinctly outlined against the dark sky. In Brittany, one rather hungers for these fine ecclesiastical monuments. Normandy is so full of them that we miss them here. Brittany has the advantage in its old towns, but the mind sometimes asks for something higher and more perfect than mere street architecture.

Therefore, even to-night, in the darkness, we revelled and gloried in the magnificent cathedral that stood before us in such grand proportions. The spires seemed to touch the skies. The west front was in deep shadow. We traced the outlines of flying buttresses, of heavier buttresses between the windows, of the beautiful apse. The windows, faintly lighted up, added wonderfully to the effect. Surely the church was not closed? We tried the west door, it yielded, and we entered.

The interior was in semi-darkness; a gloom that almost inspired

awe ; a silence and repose which forbade the faintest echo of our footsteps. Pillars and aisles and arches could be barely outlined. Everything seemed dim and intangible ; we felt that we were going through a vision, there was so little that was real or earthly about it ; so much that was beautiful, mysterious, full of repose and saintly influence. The far east end was lost in obscurity, and we could barely trace the outlines of the splendid roof. Far down, near a confessional, knelt a small group of hooded women, motionless as carven images. Their heads were bowed, their whole attitude betrayed the penitential mood. There might have been eight or ten at most, and they never stirred. But every now and then a fair penitent issued from the confessional box ; and, cloaked and hooded, glided back to the seat she had lately occupied, and resumed the penitential attitude. The ceremony was drawing near its end when we entered, and when all was over they rose in a group and, noiselessly as phantoms, like spirits from the land of shadows, passed down the long aisle and disappeared into the night.

It was a strange hour for confession, and there must have been some special reason for it. They were strangely dressed, too, in their silken cloaks and hoods, as if they belonged to some religious order, or some charitable institution. We wondered much.

When the west doorway had closed behind them, and not before, the priest left his box, and we started as we recognised our fellow traveller. How came it that he was confessing so soon after his arrival, or confessing at all, in a church to which, as far as we knew, he was not attached ? His tall and portly form looked magnificent and commanding as he stepped forth into the shadowy aisle, and, preceded by a verger, or suisse, bearing a lighted flambeau and a staff of office, was soon lost in the sacristy.

We lost ourselves in dreams. It is wonderfully refreshing to fall out of the influence of the crowded and commonplace world into these silent resting-places, which whisper so much of Heaven, and seem to breathe out a full measure of the spiritual life. They seem steeped in a religious, a celestial atmosphere; just as, on the Sabbath, in quiet country places, far from crowded haunts, surrounded only by the beauties of nature, there seems a special peace and repose in earth and sky, and people say to each other, " One feels that it is Sunday."

But we were very nearly in danger of prolonging our dreams until the night shadows passed away, and the day-dawn broke and lighted up that far-off east window. H. C. was a very broken reed to trust to on such occasions. He was not only wrapped in visions—his spirit seemed altogether to have taken flight. I was rudely brought back to earthly scenes and necessities by hearing the key hastily turned in the west door by which we had entered, and the verger commencing to retrace his steps, preparatory to putting out the lights and departing himself through the sacristy.

We hurried up to him, having no mind to pass the night in silent contemplation, with the pavement for couch and a stone for pillow. The influence we had just experienced must have given us "pallid sorrowful faces," for the verger almost dropped his torch, and his keys fell to the ground and awoke mysterious echoes in the distant arches.

It was a weird, wonderfully expressive scene. The torch threw lights and shadows upon aisle and arch, which flickered and danced like so many ghosts at play, until our nerves felt overwrought and our flesh creeped. In our present mood it all seemed too strange, too mysterious for earth. We felt as if we had joined the land of shadows in very truth. But the verger's voice awoke us to realities: a very earthly voice, unmusical and pronounced, not at all in harmony with the moment. It grated upon us; nevertheless, under the circumstances, it was good hearing.

"Sirs, you are very imprudent," he cried. "You might have been locked up for the night, and I promise you that it is neither warm nor lively in this great building at three o'clock in the morning. You also alarmed me, for I took you for ghosts. I have seen them and believe in them, and I ought to know. When I die I am persuaded that I, too, shall visit these haunts, whose pavement I have trod with staff and torch for fifty years. I took you for ghosts, look you, for you seem harmless and peaceable, incapable of visiting these sacred aisles for sacrilegious purposes."

We felt flattered. The countenance is undoubtedly the index to the inner man, though it is not given to everyone to read the riddle. It was consoling to hear that we did not exactly look like midnight assassins.

"I have never come across anyone like this before," continued the verger. "I was not in the least prepared for you. What could have induced you to come in and contemplate all this darkness, and risk being locked up for the night? If I had been at the other end when I discovered you, I should have fled, quite sure that you were ghosts. I tell you that I have seen ghosts, but I do not care to converse with them; they rather frighten me."

"Those fair penitents," murmured H. C. "They looked very graceful and picturesque; therefore they ought to be very pretty. Could I go and see them, and make a sketch of them? Do you think they would admit me? Are they nuns?"

"They are not nuns, or they would not be here," returned the old verger. "But they do a great deal of good. For my part I should say their confession was superfluous. They can have no sins. *I* never go to confession. What could I say? My life is always the same. I get up in the morning, open the church; lock it up at night, go to bed. I eat my meals in peace, do harm to no one, am in charity with all men. There is my life from January to December. What have I to confess?"

"You are an extremely interesting character, but not so interesting as the fair penitents," said H. C., bringing him back to the point from which he had wandered. "Who are they, and can I go and call upon them?"

"I don't believe they would admit you if you took them an order from the Pope," returned the old verger emphatically. "Without being nuns, they have taken a vow of celibacy, and live in partial retirement. No man is ever admitted within their portals, excepting their Father Confessor, and he is old and ugly; in fact, the very image of a baboon. A very good and pious man, all the same, is his reverence, and very learned. These ladies teach the children of the poor; they nurse the sick; they have a small orphanage; and they are full of good works."

"Why were they here to-night?"

"Whenever that very holy man, the Reverend Father, visits Quimper, they always make it a point of going to confess to him the very first night of his arrival. The good Mother of the establishment, as she is called, is his cousin. I am told that she is Madame la Comtesse, by right, but renounced the world for the sake of doing good. The Reverend Father arrived only this evening by train. He went straight to the palace, took a bouillon, and immediately came on here. He is a great man. You should come on Sunday and hear him preach. There have been times when I have seen the women sob, and the men bow their heads. But it grows late, sirs. It is not worth while opening that west door again. If you will follow me, I will let you out by the sacristy. We will lock up together, and leave this great building to darkness and the ghosts."

And ghosts indeed there seemed to be as we followed him up the aisle. He put out the few lights that remained, until his torch alone guided our footsteps, which sounded in the immense space, and disturbed the mysterious silence by yet more mysterious echoes. Lights and shadows cast by the torch flitted about like wings. The choir gates were closed, and within them all was darkness and solemnity. Finally we entered the sacristy, where again the surplices hanging up in rows looked strange and suggestive. The old verger opened the door, extinguished his torch, and we stood once more in the outside night, under the stars and the sky.

"How often we come in for these experiences," said H. C. "How delightful they are; full of a sacred beauty and solemnity. How few ever attempt to enter a cathedral at night, and how much they lose. And yet," he mused, "perhaps not so much as we imagine. If their souls responded to such influences, they would seek them out. The needle is attracted to the pole; like seeks like—and finds it. You cannot draw sweet water from a bitter well."

The town was in darkness. The shops were now all closed, but lights gleamed from many windows. The beautiful latticed panes

we had found in Morlaix were here very few and far between. Here and there we came upon gabled outlines, but much that we saw seemed modern and unpicturesque; very tame and commonplace after our late experience in the cathedral. The streets were silent and deserted; all doors were closed; the people of Quimper, like those of Morlaix, evidently carried out the good old rule of retiring early. Occasionally we came upon a group of buildings, or a solitary house standing out conspicuously amidst its fellows, which promised well for the morrow, and made us "wish for the morning."

When we found our way back to the quay, all was in darkness. The fair had put out its lights, closed its doors, and dismissed the assembly. Where the people had gone to, we knew not; we had seen none of them. A few cafés were still open, and their lights fell across the pavement and athwart the roads, and gleamed upon the rustling trees. We turned in to the hotel, where all was quiet. The night was yet young, but the staircases were in darkness and we had to grope our way. Decidedly it was the most uncivilized place we had yet come to, and Catherine was not very far wrong in her judgment.

A Brittany Servant.

The next morning we awoke to grey skies. "It always rains at Quimper," said Catherine, and she was only quoting a proverb. There was something close and oppressive and depressing about the town. The air was enervating. The hotels were unfavourably placed. The quays were commonplace—for Brittany. There was nothing romantic or beautiful about the river, which, I have said, resembled a canal. Its waters were black and sluggish, confined, as they probably were, by locks. In front rose high cliffs which shut

out the sky and the horizon and heaven's glorious oxygen. We many of us know what it is to dwell for some time under the shadow of a great mountain. Gradually it seems to oppress us and crush down upon us until we feel that we must get away from it or die of suffocation. Here there was a heaviness in the air which taxed all our mental resources, our reserve of energy, our amiability to the utmost.

The cathedral by daylight should be our first care, and we found it worthy of all the effect it had produced upon us last night. All its mystery and magic had gone, but all the beauty and perfection of architecture remained. Certainly we had seen nothing like it in Brittany.

It is dedicated to St. Corentin, a holy man who is supposed to have come over from Cornwall in the very early ages of the Christian era. Quimper was then the capital of the Cornouaille, a corruption, as we can easily trace, of the word Cornwall. The cathedral, commenced about the year 1239, was only completed in 1515. The spires are modern, but of such excellent workmanship and design that they in no way interfere with the general effect. The harmony of the whole is indeed remarkable when it is considered that it was nearly three centuries in process of construction. The west front is very fine and stately, with deep portals magnificently sculptured. It was commenced in 1424, and is surmounted by two flamboyant windows, one above the other. Within the contour of the arch is a triple row of angels, sculptured with a great deal of artistic finish. Time, however, whilst beautifying it, has robbed it of some of its fineness.

The towers were also commenced in 1424, and the great bell of the clock which they contain dates from 1312. The north and south doorways are both fine. The latter is dedicated to St. Catherine, and a figure of the saint adorns a niche in the left buttress. Both portals possess scrolls bearing inscriptions or mottoes, such as, A ma Vie, one of the mottoes of the House of Brittany. In the pediment of the west doorway is the finest heraldic sculpturing that the Middle Ages of Brittany produced. In the centre, the lion of Montfort holds the banner of Brittany, on which may be read the motto of Duke John V.: Malo au riche duc. In the corner to the left are the arms of Bishop Bertrand de Rosmadec, stamped with the mitre and crozier, and the motto, En bon Espoir. Many other mottoes, such as Perac (Wherefore?); A l'aventure; Léal à ma foy; En Dieu m'attens, belonging to different lords of Brittany, will also be found here.

The effect of the interior is extremely grand and imposing. It is of great height, whilst the side chapels and outer aisles give it an appearance of more breadth than it deserves. The apse is polygonal. The principal nave, with its large arches, its curved triforium, and its flamboyant windows, bears the mark of the fifteenth century. The choir is thirteenth century, and possesses a triforium with a double

gallery, surrounded by gothic arches supported by small columns, of which the capitals are extremely elegant.

The church has a peculiarity which is not often found, at any rate in so pronounced a manner. The chancel is not in a line with the nave, but inclines to the left, or north. Thus, in standing at the west end, only a portion of the apse can be seen. The effect is singular, and, at the first moment, seems to offend. But after a time the peculiarity becomes decidedly effective. The stiffness of the straight line, of the sides running exactly parallel one with the other, is lost. One grows almost to like the break in the uniformity of design. It appeals to the imagination. Certain other cathedrals incline in the same way, but in a more modified form. The architects' reasons for thus inclining the choir are lost in obscurity. By some it has been supposed that their motive was purely effect; by others that it was in imitation or commemoration of our Lord, Who, when hanging upon the cross, inclined His Head to the left.

Many of the windows are old, and add greatly to the fine effect of the interior. Those in the nave date from the end of the fifteenth century. Some of those in the choir—unfortunately the most conspicuous—are modern; but a few are ancient. The whole interior has suffered in tone by restoration and scraping.

The high-altar is richly decorated with enamels and precious stones. The tabernacle—in the centre of which is a figure of the Saviour in the act of blessing—is flanked by twelve arcades, containing the figures of the Apostles in relief, holding the instrument of their martyrdom. It is crowned by a cross with double rows, or branches, at the foot of which are the evangelists with their symbolical animals. The lower arms of the cross bear the figures of the Virgin and St. John weeping at the feet of the crucified Redeemer.

Amongst the treasures of the cathedral are preserved three drops of blood, of which the following is the legend:—

A pilgrim of Quimper, on starting for the Holy Land, had confided a sum of money to a friend. On returning, he claimed the money, but the friend denied having received it, offering to take an oath to that effect before the crucifix in the church of St. Corentin. At the moment of raising his hand to take the oath, he gave a stick that he carried to his friend to hold. The stick was hollow and contained the gold. As soon as he had taken the oath, the stick miraculously broke in two, and the money rolled on to the pavement. At the same moment the feet of the crucifix, held together by a single nail, separated, and three drops of blood fell on to the altar. These drops were carefully absorbed by some linen, which is preserved amongst the treasures of the church. The miracle is reproduced in a painted window of one of the chapels.

Last night we had seen the interior in the gloom and mystery of darkness; this morning we saw it by the dim religious light of day. It was difficult to say which view was the more impressive. The

results were very different. We now gazed upon all its beauty of detail, all the harmony of perfect architecture. The coloured rays coming in through the ancient stained windows added their glamour and refinement to the scene; to those that were more modern we tried to shut our eyes. The lofty pillars of the nave, separating the aisles, rose majestically, fitting supports for the beautiful gothic arches above them, in their turn surmounted by the triforium; in their turn again crowned by the ancient windows. Above all, at a great height, came the arched roof. Thus the eye was carried up from beauty to beauty until it seemed lost in dreamland. Wandering aside, it fell upon the aisles and side chapels, visions of beauty interrupted only by the wonderful columns, with their fine bases and rich capitals. The east window seemed very far off, a portion of it lost in the curve to the left, together with the beautiful gothic arches and double triforium of that side of the choir.

We sat and gazed upon all, and lost ourselves in the spell of the vision; and presently our old friend the verger found us out.

"But you *live* in the cathedral!" he exclaimed.

"No," we replied; "we should only like to do so. We envy you, whose days are chiefly passed here."

"I don't know," he returned, with the resigned air of a martyr. "If you had trodden this pavement for fifty years as I have, I think you would like to change the scene. And I have not the chance of doing it even in the next state, for you know I have a conviction that I shall come back here as a ghost. I thought *you* were ghosts last night, and a fine fright you gave me. I don't know why ghosts should frighten one, but they do. I don't like to feel that when I get into the next state, and come back to earth as a ghost, I shall frighten people. It would be better not to come back at all."

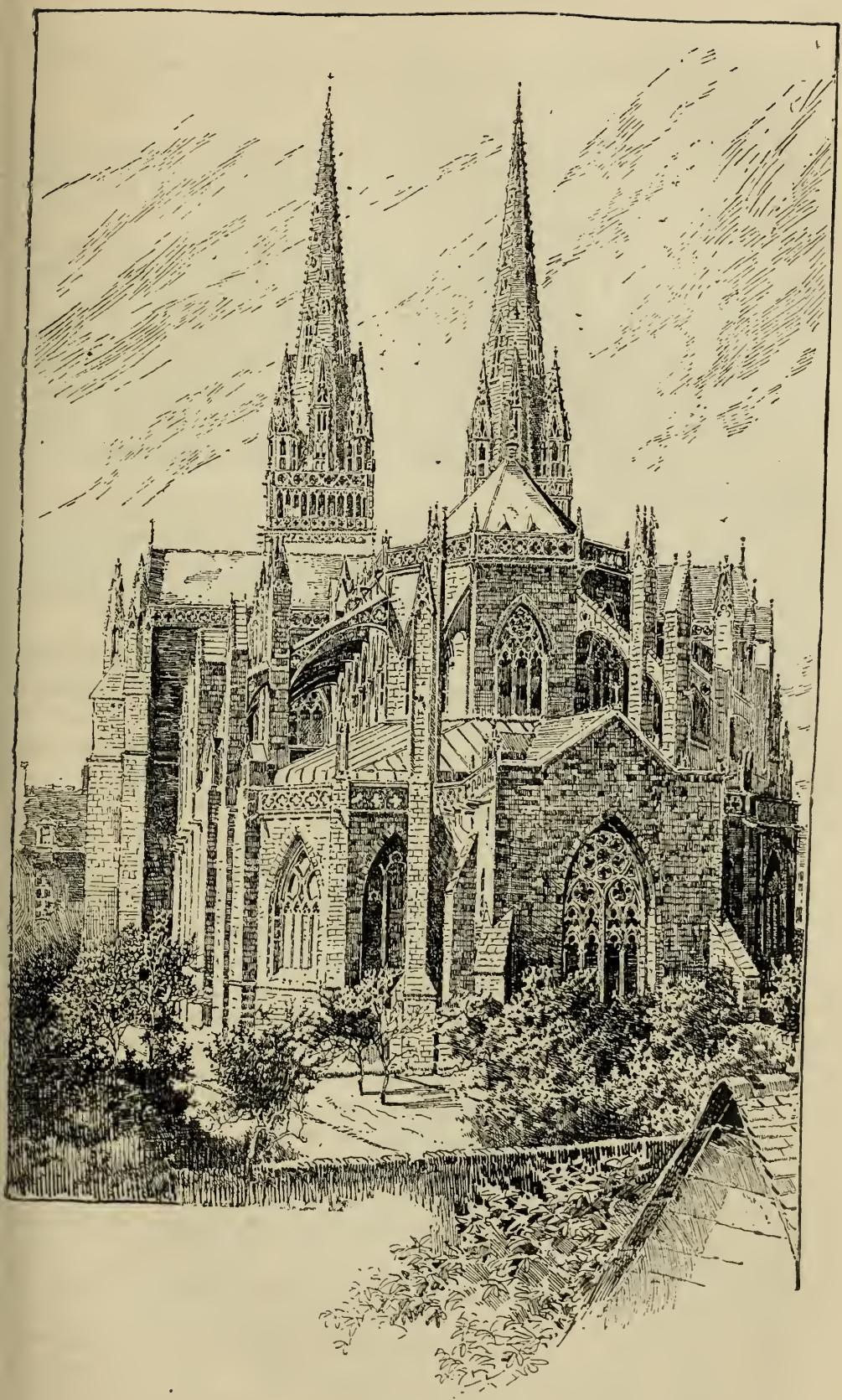
"What are they like, those that you have seen?" we asked, out of curiosity.

He closed his eyes, as if invoking a vision, put on a very solemn expression, and then opened them with a wide stare into vacancy. We quite started and looked behind us to see if any were visible.

"No, they are not there," he said. "They only come at night. How can I describe them? How can you describe a shadow? They are all shadows, and they seem everywhere at once. I never hear them, but I can see them and feel them. I mean that I feel them morally—their influence: of course you cannot handle a ghost. The air grows cold, and an icy wind touches my face as they pass to and fro."

"Then if the wind is icy they cannot come from purgatory?" suggested H. C. very innocently.

The old verger seemed a little doubtful; the idea had not occurred to him. "I don't know about that," he said. "I have heard that the extremes of heat and cold have the same effect upon one. So perhaps what feels like ice to me is really the opposite. But my



QUIMPER.

idea is that the ghosts who appear on earth are exempt from purgatory: to visit the scenes of their former haunts under different conditions must be sufficient punishment for their worst sins."

So that our verger was also a philosopher.

"Have you never spoken to one, and made some inquiry about the next world?" we asked. "Have they never given you some idea of what it is all like?"

"Never," he replied. "I am much too frightened. Just as frightened now as I was when I first saw them fifty years ago. Nor would they reply. How can they? How can shadows talk? I only once took courage to speak," he added, as if by an after recollection. "I thought it was the ghost of a woman who promised to marry me, and then jilted me for a journeyman cabinet-maker. He treated her badly and she died at the end of two years. Somehow I felt as if it was her spirit hovering about me, and I took courage and spoke."

"Well?"

"I received no answer; only a long, long sigh, which seemed to float all through the building and pass away out of the windows. But it was a windy night, and it may have been only that. For if shadows can't talk, I don't see how they can sigh."

The old verger evidently had faith in his ghosts. The fancy had gained upon him and strengthened with time into part of himself; as inseparable from the cathedral as its aisles and arches.

"Have you never tried the experiment of passing a night in these old walls?" we asked.

"Once; thirty years ago."

"And the result?"

He turned pale. "I can never speak of that night. What I saw then will never be known. I cannot think of it without emotion—even after thirty years. Ah, well! my time is growing short. I shall soon know the great secret. When we are young and going up-hill, we think ourselves immortal, for we cannot see the bottom of the other side, where lies the grave. But I have been going down-hill a long time; I am very near the end of the journey, and see the grave very distinctly."

"Yet you seem very happy and cheerful," said H. C.

"Why not?" returned the old verger. "Old age should not be miserable, but the contrary. The inevitable cannot be painful and was never intended to be anything but a source of consolation; I have heard the Reverend Father say so more than once. Shall you come and hear him preach next Sunday? The whole place will be thronged. He spoke to me about you this morning—it must be you—I have just been to the Evéché for his commands—and said that in case you came I was to reserve two places for you inside the choir gates—quite the place of honour, sirs. You will see and hear well; and when preaching, it is almost as good to watch

him as to listen. Ah! I have been here fifty years, but I never saw his equal."

"And the Bishop?"

"I never make comparisons; they must always be to the disadvantage of one or the other," replied this singular old man. "And now I must away to my duties."

"One word more," said H. C. hastily. "Will those picturesque ladies come again to Confession to-night?"

"To-night!" he returned reproachfully. "Do you think those virtuous creatures pass their lives in sinning—like ordinary beings? No, no. Besides—enough's as good as a feast, and they were well shriven last night. They are now reposing in the odour of sanctity. Au revoir, messieurs. I see your hearts are in the cathedral, and I know that I shall meet you here again before Sunday."

He departed. We watched his stooping figure and his white hair moving slowly up the aisle, so fitting an object for the venerable building itself. He disappeared in the sacristy, and a few moments after we found ourselves without the building, standing in the shadow of the great towers, under the grey skies of Quimper.

TO MY SOUL.

From the French of Victor Hugo.

You stray, my soul, whilst gazing on the sky!
The path of duty is the path of life!
Sit by the cold hearth where dead ashes lie,
Put on the captive's chain—endure the strife.
Be but a servant in this realm of night,
O child of light!

To lost and wandering feet deliverance bring;
Fulfil the perfect law of suffering;
Drink to the dregs the bitter cup; remain
In battle last; be first in tears and pain—
Then, with a prayer that much may be forgiven,
Go back to Heaven!

C. E. Meetkerke.

SO VERY UNATTRACTIVE!

"YES," meditated pretty Mrs. Hart; "I suppose it would be invidious to pass her over and ask the other three, but I would so much rather have them."

"Cannot you ask the whole four?" suggested her sister.

"Does it not strike you as being almost too much of a good thing? You see, our space is not unlimited."

"Ask the three eldest," said Bertie Paine decidedly.

"But I do not want her. What use is she? She can sing, certainly, but you cannot keep her singing all the evening; and the rest of the time she neither talks nor flirts. And she is altogether so very unattractive," ended Mrs. Hart, despondently.

"Who is it?" asked the handsomest man in the room, strolling up to the group by the window. "Who is this unfortunate lady? I always feel such sympathy with the unattractive, as you know."

"Naturally," laughed Mrs. Hart. "The individual in question is a Miss Mildmay, a plain person and the eldest of four sisters."

"Mildmay? Who are they? I used to know people of that name, and there were four girls in the family. One of them—her name was Minnie, I remember—promised to grow up very pretty."

"So she is; Minnie is the third. They are certainly your friends, Mr. Ratcliff. They are all pretty but the eldest, and all their names begin with M: Margaret, Miriam, Minnie, and Maud. Absurd, is it not?"

"Somebody had a strong fancy for alliteration. So Miss Mildmay is plain?"

"Very plain, very dull, very uninteresting," said Mrs. Hart and her sister in a breath. "Much given to stocking-knitting and good works."

"And good works comprise?" quoth Mr. Ratcliff, interrogatively.

"She sat up every night for a week with Blanche Carter's children when they had diphtheria, and saved their lives by her nursing," said Elsie Paine indignantly. "That is the woman that those good people sneer at. You are not fair to her, Mrs. Hart. She has a sweet face when you come to know her."

"There, you have put Elsie up," cried mischievous Bertie. "No more peace for you here, Mrs. Hart. Come out into the garden with me, and postpone this question in favour of tennis."

The conclave broke up and Mark Ratcliff said and heard no more of Margaret Mildmay. He betook himself to solitude and cigars, and as he strode over the breezy downs he wondered what a predilection for stocking-knitting and good works might signify in the once merry girl, and if they might be possibly a form of penance for past misdeeds.

"She did behave abominably," he said to himself, flinging a cigar-end viciously away into a patch of dry grass, which ignited and required much stamping before it consented to go out. "Yes, she behaved abominably, and at my time of life I might amuse myself better than in thinking of a fickle girl. Poor Margaret! stockings and good works—she might have done as well taking care of me!"

Then he lit another cigar, put up a covey of partridges, remembered how he used to shoot with Margaret's father, told himself that there was no fool like an old fool—not referring to Mr. Mildmay in the least—and took himself impatiently back into the town.

And there he did a very dishonourable thing.

A bowery lane ran at the bottom of the gardens attached to a row of scattered villas, picturesque residences inhabited by well-to-do people; and along the bank were placed benches here and there, inviting the passer-by to rest.

From one of the gardens came the sound of quiet voices, one of which he knew, though it had been unheard for years. He sat himself deliberately down upon the bench conveniently near the spot, and hearkened to what that voice had to say.

"Sing to me, Margaret, dear," pleaded the other speaker. "I am selfish to be always wanting it, I know, but it will not be for long now, and if you do not sing me 'Will he Come?' I shall keep on hearing it till I have to try to sing it myself, and that hurts."

"Hush, Ailie. You know I will sing," and Mark Ratcliff held his breath in surprise as the notes of the song rose upward.

Margaret used to sing, but not like this. Every note was like a winged soul rising out of prison. He had never heard such a voice before. No wonder that Mrs. Hart had said that she could sing, and no wonder that this sick girl wanted to hear it. By the way, this was one of the good works, of course!

> "Rest to the weary spirit,
> Peace to the quiet dead,"

repeated Ailie as the song died away. "He never came, Margaret, and he never will come to me. It may be wicked, but I could die gladly if I could see him first and know that he had not betrayed me. It is terrible to be drifting out into the dark without a word from him!"

"Dear Ailie, why do you make me sing this wretched song? Why do you try to dwell on the thought of faithless loves? Have patience a little; your letters may yet find him."

"Too late. In time for him to drop a tear over my grave and tell you that he never meant to hurt me," cried the girl hysterically. "Oh, Margaret! Why do I tell you all the anguish that eats upon my heart? If you could only know the comfort you are to me! the blessed relief of lying in your arms and telling you what nobody else

could forgive or understand! You are the best person I know, and yet you never make me feel myself lost beyond redemption."

"You are talking nonsense, darling," said the voice of the very dull person.

"Am I, you pearl of womanhood? What would you say if I told you all the fancies I have about you? Ah, Margaret, I do not want to know that you have had your heart broken by a false lover!"

"My dear, I was always a plain and unattractive person, just as I am at this day," answered Margaret in a voice of infinite gentleness. "But why should you not know? There are more faithless than faithful lovers, may be; the one I had grew tired of so dull a person and he went away. That was all."

Then the two women moved away towards the house and the garden lay in silence.

Mark Ratcliff sat stiff with astonishment.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed at last. "She flings all the blame on me! The whole treachery was hers, and this is positively the coolest thing that ever I heard. Faithless lover, indeed! When she dismissed me with actual insult! But a woman with such a voice might do almost anything, you plain and unattractive Miss Mildmay!"

He lit another cigar, rose in leisurely fashion and sought the way to the front entrances of the villas. Under the shade of the horse-chestnuts, which his critical eye decided to be, like himself and Margaret, approaching the season of the sere and yellow leaf, he loitered, smoking and watching, and counting up the years since he had waited and watched for the same person before.

At last the right door opened and down the steps came a very sober-looking and unconscious lady. She was thinking of nothing but the dying girl from whom she had just parted.

"Margaret!"

She started violently. She knew the voice well enough, but after these years it was impossible that it should be sounding here.

"Margaret!" he said again imperatively.

"Mr. Ratcliff," she faltered. "I did not expect to see you again."

"Your expectations seem to be a little curious," he replied, surveying her coolly. "There is a great deal that you have to explain to me. What do you mean by calling me a false lover?"

"Who told you that I accused you of falsehood?" she asked, dropping the book she was carrying in her surprise. "If I did you could scarcely contradict me, but this is not quite the place for such discussions."

He possessed himself of the book and led the way to the public gardens, where the principal walks offered privacy enough at an hour when most of the world was busy over tennis. Children and nurse-maids do not count as intruders on privacy.

"See here, Margaret, I was eavesdropping under the garden-fence,

while you talked with your sick friend, and I heard you giving me a famously bad character. At least," suddenly recollecting himself, "unless I have made a fool of myself, and it was somebody else you meant."

Margaret said nothing.

"Had you ever any other love?"

"Never," said she, and the colour flew up into her pale face. She did not at all understand the accusation brought against her, or the fierceness of the accuser.

"Then apologise at once for the charge you have brought against me."

She looked up at him with knitted brows. She wanted to look at him, but her eyes would drop again immediately.

"Are you not unreasonable?" she asked. "Years ago you made love to me. Then you went away. Your father was ill, and you could not choose but go, but you gave me to understand that you were coming back to me. You never came. Do you call that faithfulness?"

"I wrote."

"Never."

"Margaret!" he cried indignantly. "I wrote and had your answer. Are you dreaming?"

"You never wrote. In my life I never wrote to you."

"Good heavens! When I have your letter in my pocket! I wrote to you asking if I might come back as your accepted lover, and you sent me this in return," said he, giving her the paper for which he had searched his pocket-book.

She took it and looked it over. When she gave it back her glance was fixed far away over the miraculous river that ran with mimic waterfalls through the gardens, and she was ghastly pale.

"I did not write that," she said. "You ought to have known it."

"It is your signature and your hand."

"It is like my hand. I never signed myself M. Mildmay. How could I, when we were all M. Mildmay?"

A light broke in upon him. They were all M. Mildmay, of course, and he remembered a long-forgotten feud with Miriam. He bit his lip and stamped his foot angrily. What a fool he had been!

"I am sorry," said Margaret humbly. "For all the world I would not have insulted you, and it is cruel that you should have had to think it of me. I do apologise for any share I have had in it."

Her heart and throat were almost bursting with agony as she spoke in those quiet tones, and he stamped away up the path with his back to her.

"Margaret!" he said, coming back and seizing her hands. "I thought I was case-hardened, but just tell me that you loved me then!"

"I love you now," she answered, crying a little. "I am not of the sort that changes in the matter of loving. Is it bold to say that, and I so unattractive?"

"Hang your unattractiveness! Margaret, just say, 'I love you, Mark Ratcliff,' and set me some atoning penance for my idiocy. You do not know what a curse that vile paper has been to me," and he shot the offending missive into the foolish little river and broke into vigorous and ungraceful language with regard to the writer.

"Hush, hush!" cried Margaret, in deep distress. "She is my sister, and she could not know how much it meant to me."

"Of course not! And what did it matter to her that I must go hungry and thirsty all these years, cursing the whole of womankind because you had tricked me!"

"Oh, why did you distrust me?" exclaimed she sorrowfully, leaning back against the holly arbour in which they had sheltered, and bursting into downright weeping.

"What an amiable desire you evince to throw the fault on me, Margaret," and he drew her hands from her face very gently; "must there be tears now that I have found you again? Forgive me, dear. I was worse than a fool to doubt you, but now we will leave room for no more possibilities of trouble and parting. I am going to find out that other poor distrusted beggar, your friend Ailie's lover, and let him know what you women accuse him of, and when I come back, we shall see!"

"See what?" gasped Margaret.

"What we shall see!" he returned, triumphantly.

"Awfully sorry to have been late for dinner, Mrs. Hart," said Mr. Ratcliff, without the least appearance of distress, when he joined the ladies in the drawing-room; "I was unavoidably detained. By the way, your party is not for another month, I think?"

"No," she replied, wondering why her handsome friend looked so gleefully mischievous. "I have fixed upon the thirtieth; I do not want to clash with Mrs. Dent and Mrs. Clarence."

"Then I am commissioned to tell you that you may invite all the Misses Mildmay, without the least inconvenience. Miss Mildmay the undesirable will not be in a position to accept your invitation. It is anticipated that she will then be on her wedding tour as Mrs. Mark Ratcliff."

"Good gracious! How sudden!" exclaimed Mrs. Hart, opening her pretty blue eyes to their widest extent; and for the life of her she could not help adding under her breath, "And she so very unattractive!"

MADEMOISELLE ELISE.

By Edward Francis.

I.

M. LORMAN, director of the Théâtre Royal, Rocheville, stood at a window of Mademoiselle Elise's apartment that looked on the Rue Murillo, Paris. His gloves were drawn on, he carried his hat and stick, and he waited impatiently—now smoothing his grey moustache, now looking at his watch, now tapping his well-polished boot with the tip of his cane. Then he turned his back to the window and began to walk to and fro. At the second turn, he paused before a picture—a little water-colour sketch—that hung from the wall. It was a painting of a girl dressed in a rich costume of the Empire. Her slight figure was bent a little forward, and her tiny hands drew back a pale green skirt, just so much as to show one dainty pink shoe. M. Lorman adjusted his spectacles to make a closer inspection.

The door of the room opened, and Mademoiselle Elise came in, carrying an open note-book in her hand.

Mademoiselle was about twenty-four years of age, and not tall, her figure was slender and well-proportioned, her dress fitted perfectly. Her hair and eyes were dark, her lips thin. When she talked her features grew animate, and she became beautiful.

"Yes," she said, "you may take rooms for me at the Hôtel St. Amand. I want to be close by the cathedral."

Then she looked at the picture.

"Did you recognise me?"

"Of course. But who did it? It is charming."

"It is very nice. Bouvard painted it and gave it to me. I am very fond of it."

"It is an excellent likeness!"

"I think it is. I am vain enough to be proud of it. But tell me—what shall I do with myself at Rocheville?"

"As if you were ever at a loss! You will have enough society; and there are the students and the officers ——"

"Bah! I am sick of them all. I shall turn recluse and spend all my days in some quiet nook by the sea. After Paris, one hates society."

"After Paris," said M. Lorman, "one hates many good things."

He laughed self-complacently, and held out his hand.

"Good-bye."

She went with him to the hall, and waited, leaning against the table and breaking to pieces a shred of grass that she had taken

from a vase, while he drew a great packet of loose papers from the breast-pocket of his coat, and tried to discover the time of his train.

"Who will play the dance in 'Le vrai Amant?'" she asked.

"Monsieur Raoul—a man who fiddles for love of the thing. He is a hunchback, or nearly so, and will interest you."

"Why will he interest me?"

Monsieur, as he answered, ran his gloved finger slowly down the line of close figures.

"He will interest you for several reasons. Firstly, because he plays superbly and asks for no pay. He is rich. Secondly, because he is clever and dislikes women; and, finally—because you won't understand him."

Mademoiselle laughed defiantly.

"He is a gentleman, then?"

"Yes."

"Will he dislike *me?*"

"Perhaps I have used a wrong word. It is more disdain than dislike."

"Will he disdain me?"

M. Lorman replaced the papers in his pocket and looked with comic gravity at her, as if to judge the effect she would be likely to have on his friend. Then, his eyes twinkling with mischief, he answered deliberately:

"Yes."

He took up his hat and stick and prepared to go.

"Eh bien," she retorted, "that is a challenge. You have found something to occupy me. Adieu. Take care that my room faces the cathedral."

II.

SOMEONE had gone out by the stage-door and the noise of the storm came in along the low passage. The theatre was almost in darkness. Only Monsieur Raoul and old Jacques Martin were there. In the shadow, as he bent over his violin case, the younger man seemed tall and well-made; but when he stood up, though he was tall, his bent shoulders became apparent, and the light fell on a stern, pale face that seemed older than its thirty years. He began to button his cloak around him.

"You might tell ma femme, Monsieur Raoul, that I shall be late. I must prepare for to-morrow."

The old man and his wife kept house for Raoul, who was a bachelor.

"Assuredly I will tell her." Then Raoul went away.

The rain had ceased, but the scream of the wind sounded again and again. The thin, weather-beaten trees bent low, like reeds; and

heavy clouds, suffused with moonlight, drove inland in rugged broken masses.

For a few moments Jacques lingered on; then he put out the lights, locked up, drew his coat closer round his spare body, and hurried across to the more cheerful shelter of the Café des Artistes.

In the Rue Louise the door of Raoul's house opened directly into the kitchen. Madame Martin was sitting patiently by the fire, knitting. She rose and took the violin case and wiped the raindrops from its waterproof covering. Then she hung up Raoul's cloak.

"And Jacques, Monsieur?" she inquired.

"Jacques will be late. He bade me tell you, Julie."

"He is always late!"

"He has to prepare for Mademoiselle Elise, who comes to-morrow."

Raoul went to his room, and in a few moments Julie carried his supper up to him there. Then, with the assurance of an old servant, she stood a moment at the door, with her hands crossed before her.

"The new actress comes from Paris, Monsieur?"

"Yes."

"It will be a good thing."

"A very good thing—for the Théâtre Royal."

"She will require a great salary."

"Of course; but the proprietors will gain. Everybody will want to see her."

"She lodges at M. Lorman's?"

"No. She will stay at the Hôtel St. Amand, opposite the cathedral."

"Is she old, Monsieur?"

"No, not old; not thirty years."

"Ah!——The sea is very rough to-night, Monsieur."

"Yes; more so than we often see it."

She went downstairs. By-and-by, as she sat knitting, she heard Monsieur's fiddle as he played over a passage in the morrow's score.

III.

MADEMOISELLE ELISE was down early at the theatre, which looked very grey and very miserable in the pitiless daylight. M. Lorman was with her. When Raoul appeared, she said:

"So this is your monster. Introduce him to me."

And the hunchback, with his fiddle under his arm and his bow hanging loosely from his left hand, was duly presented. Mademoiselle's eyes beamed graciously as she held out her hand and said what pleasure it gave her to make the acquaintance of one who loved art for its own sake. Then, while M. Lorman bustled here and

there, she took the violin and begged Raoul to show her how to hold it. She laughed like a child when the drawing of the bow across the strings only produced a horrid noise. Then she asked him to play the dance movement from the garden scene.

He played.

"A little slower, please."

He played more slowly. She moved a few steps, and then paused and sat down, marking the time of the music with her foot.

"Yes, that is beautiful!" she said.

Raoul sat and watched while the rehearsal proceeded.

They played "Le vrai Amant." Mademoiselle infused a new life into all, and scarcely seemed to feel the labour of it. Raoul marvelled that a woman, apparently delicate, should be possessed of such tireless energy. She criticised so freely, and insisted so much on the repetition of seeming trivialities, that, as the morning wore on, Augustin —who was "le vrai Amant"—lost patience and glanced markedly at his watch. But she did not heed him.

Beside Raoul sat M. Lorman, in high spirits. "Good! good!" he ejaculated at intervals. "But she is marvellous!" And after each outburst of satisfaction he took a pinch of snuff.

When at last Mademoiselle sank exhausted into her chair, the others seized hats and cloaks and fled hurriedly, lest she should revive and begin all over again.

She called to Raoul to bring his score, that she might show him where to play slowly and where to pause; and M. Lorman having wrapped a shawl around her shoulders, she began gossiping with Augustin. When they differed, she appealed to Raoul, and agreed prettily with his decision. Augustin succumbed to her influence at once, and lost all his sulkiness. He had played at the Odéon, and he knew what art was. M. Sarcey had said of him that he would do well; and M. Regnier had been pleased to advise him. He told Mademoiselle this, and he promised to bring to her a copy of the *Temps* that she might read the great critic's words for herself. She ended the conversation with coquettish abruptness, and begged Raoul to kneel beside her chair a moment, and follow her pencil as she marked the manuscript and explained what her marks were intended to mean.

When Augustin had gone, she leaned back to where M. Lorman stood waiting behind her.

"Beg of your friend," she said, "to be my chevalier and to protect me from the dreadful people while I look at the sea."

Then at once, turning with a pleading glance towards Raoul, she added with comic earnestness:

"Have mercy on me, Monsieur, I beseech you."

M. Lorman looked uncomfortable. There was an awkward pause. Then Raoul stammered a fit reply and reddened, and, as he packed his violin away, he muttered angrily: "Shall I never rid myself of

this childish sensitiveness? It is a shame to me that an accident has deformed me."

As Mademoiselle came from her room she whispered wickedly to M. Lorman:

"You may prepare your forfeit."

But he shook his head and laughed.

"No, no," he said. "Not yet; there is time enough."

Along the sea front the folk stared covertly at the new actress, as she chatted volubly of the doings of the morning.

"Bah! they act badly—very badly," she said. "They should work harder—they are too lazy. Work—work—work—that is the only cure for them. But to-morrow they will do better, and we shall have a success."

Then she became more serious and talked of her own experience, and of the long hours that she had spent in study. "Often I used to be so tired," she said, "that I could not even sleep."

To his great astonishment Raoul found himself at his ease with her as he discussed the necessity of steady labour and the uselessness of sitting down and waiting for inspiration. In the heat of the argument they reached the Rue Louise. The violin was handed in, and they turned back again towards the sea. Madame held the door ajar to watch them.

Afterwards they strolled up through the town to the Place St. Amand. Then, because he must be tired, Mademoiselle insisted that he should stay and rest awhile, and they sat by the window like very old friends. Finally, she permitted him to depart, in order, she said, that he might get to sleep early and be strong for the morrow.

As she moved here and there in her room, she laughed quite quietly to herself, and wondered what M. Lorman had meant when he had said that she would not understand his friend.

IV.

Gerome Perrin, the collector, of Rouen, whose reputation as a connoisseur in the matter of violins has never been questioned, once offered Raoul for his violin six thousand francs. The mere record of his offer will explain why the hunchback always carried the instrument to and from the theatre. He held that he could only be quite sure of its safety so long as it remained in his keeping. It was generally agreed that the famous violin was heard at its best on the night that Mademoiselle Elise made her appearance at the Théâtre Royal, Rocheville, as Lisette, in "Le vrai Amant."

The theatre was crowded. In the first and second scenes the new actress justified her fame, and won outright the sympathy of the audience. In the third scene she surpassed herself. To Rocheville it was an artistic revelation. Even the inveterate critics praised her,

despite their creed that, outside the Comédie Française, one should not seek perfection.

The scene was the garden of an old château. In the bright light the costumes of the players made a mass of rich colour. Mademoiselle stood, prettily defiant. A ripple of music burst from the orchestra, and died away in a stately movement. With a merry laugh the revellers posed for the dance. They bowed low in courtesy—joined hands—advanced—retired. Then Raoul's violin alone continued the measure, as, one by one, the others drew away and left Mademoiselle alone. It was the Bouvard water-colour, but living and moving. Her lithe, slender body seemed light as air. Every gesture, every pose, was full of a grave dignity. In the dark theatre there was complete silence. All eyes were centred on the supple, graceful form of the dancer. Music, life, and colour were in harmony. Gradually the full orchestra took up the strain again—Mademoiselle, panting, flung herself into the ready arms of Augustin, and the stillness was broken by the thunder of applause.

After the curtain had fallen, and while the folk were yet streaming out, Jacques summoned Raoul to Mademoiselle's room. She met him with her hands outstretched.

"Chevalier, you played beautifully," she said; "and I have never danced better. You inspired me; you are my good angel. Come to me to-morrow and take me to mass."

Is she acting still? he thought. He was not sure, but it was admirably done. He felt her hands on his and he could only bow obedience and escape as speedily as possible.

Before he went to bed he took a candle and placed it so that he might see himself in the mirror. He gazed long and steadily as at a picture of a stranger. He saw a man with black hair, with a pale, earnest face, clean shaven, and with shoulders bent. In the darkness, afterwards, when he remembered the face of Mademoiselle, as she came to him with her arms outstretched, he remembered also what the mirror had shown him.

Mademoiselle, in her room at the Hôtel St. Amand, wrote to Paris: "He is a hunchback and I have appointed him chevalier. Do not laugh, my dear Hélène; you would not, if you could but see him. His sad eyes would command your pity. His face is pale and stern, but handsome, and he is kind and gentle. They say that he dislikes women; from what I have seen of the women here I do not think he is altogether to blame. He is to escort me to mass to-morrow. The good people will think that I am mad. So much the better."

She laid her pen down and leaned back with her hands clasped behind her head.

Suddenly the half smile faded from her lips, and a pained

expression flashed across her face. She sat up and finished the letter quietly. As she rose to seal it she said to herself: "No; he is too good. A grande passion would kill him."

For a week she gave herself up to Raoul's guidance. At the end of that time she knew Rocheville almost as if she had lived her life there.

V.

A MONTH passed. Mademoiselle Elise still retained her guide. Every afternoon they wandered together somewhere or other; either through the town, or by the sea, or in the woods. At a loss for any logical explanation of the strange friendship, people assumed that the two were old acquaintances. Mademoiselle never contradicted this assumption.

"He is my chevalier," she explained.

During the first few days, she commanded him with a playful authority, and talked a great deal of nonsense, much as she would have talked with any acquaintance for whom she felt but a passing interest. But it was impossible to continue in this strain with Raoul. He treated her as a reasoning being, and not as a creature fit merely to be humoured and flattered. Despite herself she began to speak from her heart and without any constraint. But she adhered honourably to her decision not to inspire him with a grande passion, and to this end she conducted herself with a simple propriety which recalled to her mind the convent discipline of the gentle Ursuline Sisters, who had taught her her first lessons.

Each day her respect for Raoul increased, as closer acquaintance revealed his character. Finally, her respect became reverence. His nature stood out in such strong contrast with the even, easy-going, selfish natures of the others with whom she came into contact. He was unlike them. He thought about life, they merely lived it. He seemed to her to be superior to the common pains and pleasures of the world. She could not imagine him being swayed by circumstances, by petty likes and dislikes. She felt that it would be easy to bear any trouble with such a friend near. His strong will attracted her. His impenetrable reserve and the strange, stern mood that came over him at times mystified and almost frightened her.

One day, on the Boulevard, they met the troops marching with quick step into the town. She thought that he tried, involuntarily, to straighten his shoulders as the stalwart figures passed. She seemed to know how the sight of them must sadden him, and her heart became filled with an inexpressible pity. But when he spoke, there was not the least tinge of dissatisfaction in his voice.

"I admire their happy nonchalance," he said. "Unconsciously they are very good philosophers. They take life as it comes to them and gauge it at its true value."

"Yes," she said; "they are happy enough now. But it must be terrible in war-time, to have to march straight to death."

"Do you think so?" he replied. "I doubt whether they perceive the terror of it. It is part of their business to die."

"Do you not fear death?" she asked him afterwards.

He was silent for a moment. Then he said slowly: "I can quite imagine circumstances in which death would be preferable to life."

"It is because life has been so unjust to him that he disdains it," she thought.

Another evening, as they sat together, looking on to the square where the women were selling flowers, he began, casually, to talk of himself. He spoke impassively of the time, eight years before, when he had fallen by accident, in the winter. For months he had lain in agony; and then slowly he had returned, almost from the grave. In three years he had regained his strength, but deformed for the rest of his life.

Her lips quivered ominously as she listened.

"It makes my heart ache to think of it," she said. "I could not have borne it."

"You would have got used to it as I did," he replied.

"I would have prayed to die."

"There was no need. I could have died if I had chosen."

He spoke simply and without the least emotion. She shuddered.

"I do not understand," she said.

"Of course you do not understand," he answered gently; "neither do the angels."

She made no response, but pressed her lips tightly together and aimlessly watched the market-people.

When he had gone away, she sat for a long time quite still.

"If he had someone to love," she said to herself at last, "he would not be so stern."

VI.

A FORTNIGHT later Raoul went on business to Rouen, and Mademoiselle was left alone.

The first day of his absence she busied herself as usual, going down to rehearsal in the morning and playing in the evening. But at night, for some indefinable reason, she felt unhappy and discontented. The next morning she sat in her room and sewed, and the hours seemed long—very long. In the afternoon she went out and, almost irresponsibly, bought a little present and carried it down to the Rue Louise to Madame Martin. She stayed there and chatted until evening. Madame was delighted to find anyone who would listen with pleasure to praise of Monsieur Raoul. The third morning Mademoiselle said to herself "It would be pleasant to go to Rouen and see the shops," and she dressed ready to start. Then her face flushed and she took off her cloak again and set it aside. After

midday Raoul returned and brought her a great bunch of roses. Her face beamed with pleasure as she took them, but immediately she became self-conscious and disquieted and would not let her eyes meet his. After he had gone she sat pensive, with a smile on her lips. Suddenly the blood mounted to her face, her expression changed, she became agitated in every nerve. "Of what folly do I dream!" she exclaimed. She went to dress for the theatre and took the roses and placed them in water on the table by her bedside. When she was ready to set out, she turned round, raised the flowers to her lips and kissed them.

At the theatre she met him again and grew unaccountably nervous. It needed all her power of will and all the prompter's aid to enable her to retain the thread of her part. At times her mind would wander and she would forget the words. Yet, to judge by the applause with which she was rewarded, her acting did not suffer noticeably.

When the curtain fell, she complained that her head ached, and sent for Raoul, and begged him to take her to walk by the sea, that the cool air might restore her.

They walked down to the Rue Louise and left the violin and then strolled on for half-an-hour by the water. Then they turned away to the Place St. Amand. The square was deserted. A single lamp fluttered in the wind. The stars shone brightly and the milky way stretched like a faint, pale cloud high over the huge black mass of the cathedral.

She was leaning on his arm, and she made him pause a moment while she stood to look up.

"If I were in pain," she said, after a moment, "or if a passion consumed me, I should watch the stars all night. They are so cold and passionless: they would teach me patience."

"You are beginning to talk poetry," he answered quietly, "and that shows that you are tired out."

"Yes," she said, "I am tired out. To-morrow I shall be better, and we will go to the woods."

Then she stood in the shadow of the hotel door and watched him until his figure disappeared in the darkness.

VII.

THE morning was bright and warm. The woods above Rocheville were brown with autumn foliage, and the brambles were heavy with long sprays of berries, red and black. Mademoiselle gave Raoul her cloak to carry, and wandered here and there, gathering the ripest fruit. By-and-by she cast away all she had gathered, and came to walk soberly beside him.

At St. Pierre, a little beyond the woods, they lunched merrily.

In the afternoon they strolled slowly back until they came to the brow of the hill that rises to the west of Rocheville.

Overhead, white clouds floated in a clear blue sky. Below, the purple-roofed houses huddled around the grey cathedral, and the distant sea, flashing in the sunlight, broke against the yellow beach.

Beside the dusty hill path were rough seats. On one of these Mademoiselle spread her cloak and rested, bidding Raoul sit on the grass beside. The birds stirred in the trees, and the low, long surge of the sea sounded monotonously.

It was after a long silence that Raoul looked up as if he were about to speak. Their eyes met. He paled visibly. Her face became scarlet. With a manifest effort he regained self-possession and stood up.

"It grows late, Mademoiselle," he said; "let us go home." And his voice sounded dry and harsh.

She rose obediently. He wrapped the cloak about her, and they walked on down the hill in silence, and entered the avenue that leads to Rocheville. The swallows wheeled and fell in long graceful circles, and the setting sunlight streaming through the trees made of the white road a mosaic of light and shadow. The glow had faded from Mademoiselle's face. Once as he moved her arm the cloak half fell. He replaced it tenderly.

At the hotel door he kissed her hand and left her.

VIII.

For an hour he walked aimlessly, often baring his hair to the cold sea-wind. Then he went back to the Place St. Amand and from under the shrine at the corner watched her lighted window. Then he went home, and until long past midnight sat without moving. Mademoiselle seemed to be near him. He recalled every event of the day. The pleasant sunlight in the woods; the merry nonsense of the lunch at St. Pierre; the homeward walk; the distant heaving waters. The blood surged like fire through his veins; he bowed down his face and groaned aloud.

Day by day he had maintained a secret battle with himself. The very philosophy which had frightened and saddened Mademoiselle was evidence of the bitter struggle, though she did not know this. If he had someone to love, she had said mentally, he would not be so stern. She deceived herself. It was because he wrestled with a passion that threatened to overwhelm his reason that he wore so often the mask of sternness.

Early in the morning he left Rocheville for Rouen. Madame, when she found his bed undisturbed, said to her husband that Monsieur must have had bad news.

Mademoiselle woke from a fitful sleep with her head aching. She waited anxiously, but Raoul did not come. It was past midday

when M. Lorman, with a grim smile, showed to her a note he had received.

"It is necessary for me to go to Rouen," it ran, "and I shall probably remain there for a few days. I beg of you to excuse me, and to convey my compliments and good wishes to Mademoiselle Elise when she departs for Paris."

As Mademoiselle read she grew cold and shuddered.

M. Lorman eyed the untouched food on the table and smiled slily.

"You have won," he said. "I am your debtor. What is to be the forfeit?"

"I am not well to-day," she answered peevishly. "Don't be stupid, please. What was it that you came to see me about?"

He looked embarrassed, and replied hastily:

"Nothing—I was passing, and called in on my way to meet Augustin. I dare not stay. He will be waiting for me. I am sorry you are ill. You must rest. Good-bye."

In the street he took out his snuff-box and excitedly inhaled two large pinches.

"Parbleu!" he muttered; "it has surprised me. I didn't think it possible."

Mademoiselle went to her bedroom and locked the door, as if to shut all the world out from her. Then she cast herself down and sobbed as if her heart would break. "Why did he not come to me?" she moaned. "Why did he not let me know?—I cannot live without him."

At Rouen, Raoul engaged a room at the Hôtel de Bordeaux. Then he started off to visit M. Gerome Perrin, but turned aside and went into the country instead. The peasants saluted him as they passed, but he did not reply. At times he talked half aloud and laughed bitterly.

Once he paused abruptly. It occurred to him that perhaps, after all, his own vanity was misleading him. No doubt Mademoiselle had already forgotten what had happened, and was wondering what had become of him. "I must write to her," he said. And the idea that he was acting unaccountably strengthened itself in his mind, and gradually he regained the mastery of himself. Was it not stupid, he thought, to suspect that Mademoiselle had discerned his secret. He had guarded it so carefully; he had never given the least sign—until her eyes had robbed him of his self-control. But to think that she should for a moment dream that a hunchback would dare—— The idea was absurd. He began to see things clearly again.

Half-an-hour later he turned and walked back to Rouen, paid his bill at the Hôtel de Bordeaux, drove to the station, and took the train to Rocheville. He had resolved to explain to Mademoiselle that he had been called unexpectedly away.

M. Lorman frowned when Jacques came to tell him that Monsieur Raoul had been able to return.

It was dark when Mademoiselle, pale and trembling, rose from her bed, her face wet with tears. She lighted a candle and began to write. Note after note she altered and destroyed. When at length she had written one to her liking, she sealed it up. Then she put on her cloak and went down towards the Rue Louise.

IX.

OUTSIDE, the rain pattered against the window; within Jacques and his wife sat at supper. Someone tapped at the door and Madame went to open it: "Ciel!" she cried. "But you are wet!"

Mademoiselle Elise spoke with quickened breath as if she had been hurrying.

"I only come to see Jacques—Jacques do you know where Monsieur Raoul is staying at Rouen? I have a message for him."

Jacques looked at his wife. It was she who answered: "Monsieur returned unexpectedly this afternoon, Mademoiselle; he is upstairs now."

The muscles of Mademoiselle's face twitched as with a sudden pain. A look of terror came into her bright eyes. She rested her hand on the chair beside her, as if she were faint.

"Take off your cloak," said Madame, "and Jacques will tell Monsieur that you are here."

Jacques rose, but Mademoiselle stopped him. "No," she said; "I will go to him, if I may. I have a message for him."

Mademoiselle Elise went up. Raoul opened the door.

"Did you wonder what had become of me?" he stammered. The unexpectedness of her coming unnerved him. He forgot his planned excuse.

"I thought you were at Rouen," she said mechanically, and without raising her eyes, "or I should not have come. I have a message for you."

"You are wet," he said. "Give me your cloak, and rest until Madame Martin has dried it."

He gave the cloak to Julie and closed the door.

The small room was lighted by a single candle. Opposite the door the wall was covered with books from floor to ceiling. In a corner an open bureau was strewed with papers. The violin was laid carelessly on an old harpsichord.

Mademoiselle saw these things as she walked over and stood by the fireplace. Her dark hair, disordered by the hood of the cloak, hung loosely over her forehead and heightened the worn expression on her white face. She drew back her black dress slightly and rested one foot on the edge of the fender, and watched the steam that rose from the damp shoe.

Jacques brought up a cup of coffee, with a message that Mademoiselle was to drink it at once, lest she should catch a cold. She smiled sadly, took the cup, raised it, touched it with her parched lips, and set it aside.

Raoul came and stood facing her. Though she did not look up she felt his gaze upon her and became uneasy, and pressed her clasped hands nervously together.

"I came to get your address from Jacques," she said. "I thought you were at Rouen." She paused and caught her breath. "I am going away to-morrow."

As he listened and watched her, he found himself noticing how like a little child she seemed.

"Sit down," he said, speaking with effort. "You are not well."

"I have scarcely slept," she answered. "I have been thinking all night—and all day——." Her bosom heaved. The tears sprang to her eyes. She covered her face with her hands.

Raoul paled, and trembled from head to foot. He clenched his teeth. His hand that rested on the edge of the mantel-shelf grasped it as if it would have crushed it.

"Why did you go away?" she said, with plaintive vehemence. "Why did you not come to me?"

Then, as if her strength failed her, she sat down.

He knelt beside her. "You have been too kind to me—Elise," he said unsteadily. "I went away from you because I feared lest I should lose command of myself; lest I should forget that I was—what I am."

At the sound of his voice pronouncing her name a strange, sudden happiness shone in her eyes. She looked at him. He read the truth, but could only believe in his happiness when, the next moment, she was clasped in his arms.

It was eleven o'clock when Madame Martin knocked at the door.

"I thought you would like to know, Monsieur," she said, "that the rain has stopped, that it grows late, and that Mademoiselle's cloak is quite dry."

X.

I subjoin the following extract for the information of those who may be sufficiently interested:—

"La Lanterne (*Journal Conservateur de Rocheville, Jeudi, 5 Février*).—Mariage—M. Berhault, Raoul Joseph Victor, 30 ans, et Mlle. Lanfrey, Elise Marie, 25 ans."

OLD CHINA.

My china makes my old room bright—
On table, shelf and chiffonnier,
Sèvres, Oriental, blue and white,
Leeds, Worcester, Derby—all are here.

The Stafford figures, quaint and grim,
The Chelsea shepherdesses, each
Has its own tale—in twilight dim
My heart can hear their old-world speech.

That vase came with a soldier's "loot,"
From Eastern cities over seas,
That dish held golden globes of fruit,
When oranges were rarities.

That tea-cup touched two lovers' hands,
When Lady Betty poured the tea;
That jar came from far Mongol lands
To hold Dorinda's pot-pourri.

That flask of musk, still faintly smelling,
On Mistress Coquette's toilet lay;
And there's a tale, too long for telling,
Connected with that snuffer-tray.

What vows that patch-box has heard spoken!
That bowl was deemed a prize to win,
Till the dark day when it got broken,
And someone put these rivets in.

My china breathes of days, not hours,
Of patches, powder, belle and beau,
Of sun-dials, secrets, yew-tree bowers,
And the romance of long ago.

It tells old stories—verse and prose—
Which no one now has wit to write,
The sweet, sad tales that no one knows,
The deathless charm of dead delight.

BUCKFASTLEIGH CHURCH.

THE

SUMMER NUMBER

OF

THE ARGOSY.

A MODERN SORCERESS.

BY INA GARVEY.

PART I.

A MILE of straggling village street, sending off a few branches to right and left; an ancient church with a square grey tower, and a graveyard that sloped down to the brink of a sweet and placid river: such was Meadowbury.

The vicarage was modern and did not adjoin the church, but stood within sight of it, and was surrounded by pretty and extensive gardens.

The village and the land for many a mile round owned Evelyn, Baron Clarges for lord. Out beyond the village, in the silent country, the trim railings at the side of the road were those of Clarges Park; through the stately open gates, with their coat of arms and proud motto, a mile-and-a-half of tree-bordered avenue led up to the mansion.

In the vicarage drawing-room, on a certain afternoon, the fortnightly Dorcas meeting was proceeding. In the post of honour was Mrs. Sterland the Vicar's wife, directing all, deferred to by all, in her twofold character of Vicaress and highly efficient needlewoman. Perhaps there was not quite so much gossip at the Meadowbury Dorcas parties as at kindred meetings elsewhere. In truth, Mrs. Sterland tacitly discouraged any tendency of the conversation to degenerate into mere gossip: as much talk about parish matters and church matters as the sewing ladies liked, but that their plain-faced, sensible, hard-working Vicaress did not love idle chatter, they were aware.

A notable woman, this Mrs. Sterland, indefatigable in doing her duty in the parish and in her home; lavish of sound, practical advice to the village housewives—advice which was backed up and illustrated by her own faultlessly managed household. By her equals she was styled on all sides "a model clergyman's wife!" and as the Rev.

Alfred Sterland fully endorsed this sentiment, there can be no doubt the encomium was deserved. When Mrs. Sterland came as a bride to Meadowbury, she did not enter upon new duties or a new sphere; she did not even enter a new home. The last Vicar was her father, and she, his only child and housekeeper in place of her dead mother, had from early girlhood discharged, both in her home and in the parish, many of those duties which now filled up the busy days of Mrs. Sterland. There were not even the joys and cares of motherhood to give a novelty to the scene of her early youth: five years married, the Sterlands were still childless.

Merrily clicked the needles as the Dorcas party worked that afternoon.

"My dear Mrs. Sterland," cried the high voice of Miss Ledboro, a middle-aged lady, something like a parrot in the face, who wore glasses and a flopping hat, and possessed an obtrusive amount of energy for what she was pleased to term "church-work." "My *dear* Mrs. Sterland! what *exquisite* feather-stitching yours is! I never see any like it, and I'm no bad judge of needlework both plain and fancy, I hope! How you find time to do everything that you do, and to do it so well, I can't understand, though I flatter myself I'm no idler. Thanks to you, Meadowbury Church sends more help to the Hullabaloo Mission than any of the neighbouring churches. Our Hullabaloo Box contains more articles than anyone's, and the articles are better, too! And yet nothing else is neglected for Hullabaloo! Ah, well! when Mr. Sterland becomes a bishop and we lose you both, the next Vicar's wife will have a hard job to satisfy us, I'm sure! You've spoiled us, Mrs. Sterland, you have indeed, for anything but a prodigy!"

"I'm afraid you've all made up your minds to spoil *me*," replied Mrs. Sterland in her quiet, matter-of-fact manner. "I hear more flattery from you ladies at the Dorcas meetings than is at all good for me."

There was a murmur of dissent at this, and Rose Kitson, a rather useless young member of the party, whose afternoon's achievement did not generally exceed a couple of button-holes or a few inches of stitching, said, pausing in her stitching and fixing her round blue eyes on the Vicaress:

"Are you always busy, Mrs. Sterland? Quite always? Do you never feel that you must give yourself a holiday and take a little enjoyment? A game of tennis, or a novel, or a spell of sheer idleness and day-dreaming?"

Mrs. Sterland's clever fingers slackened in their work; the flannel garment that was growing so rapidly in her hands was still for a brief moment as her firm, sensible face with its pale grey eyes was turned to Miss Kitson.

"What *you* consider pleasure and recreation, my dear Rose—tennis or a novel—might not seem so to me; but, busy and inde-

fatigable as you are all good enough to style me, perhaps there may be times when I snatch a bit of leisure and enjoy myself after my own fashion."

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Sterland! What a sober, useful, improving fashion that must be! I don't suppose it differs much from what *I* should call hard work!"

Mrs. Sterland's calm gaze rested on the young speaker, and then was slowly turned upon the fair landscape that lay without the windows.

"I don't suppose it does," she assented. "You and I, no doubt, Rose, have very different notions as to how we best like to fill up a leisure hour."

The Dorcas ladies bent busily over their work. Rose Kitson recommenced her herring-boning, blushing under what she considered something of a rebuke. Mrs. Sterland's calm gaze remained for a few moments on the fair scene outside; the dawn of a strange, still smile crept over her face; in another minute her fingers were flying again, and her smooth, neat head was bending over her work.

Miss Ledboro was the first to break the silence that followed.

"Of course everyone has heard the news about Lord Clarges—that he's going to be married?"

Yes; it seemed everyone had heard that.

"The young lady's a great beauty, I hear," struck in another lady. "Quite one of the belles of the present season in London—and *not* a Yankee! I can't help being pleased at that. It wouldn't have been nice to have a Yankee baroness guessing and calculating up at the Park! Well, and so he's really going to settle down at last!"

"And high time too!" cried the shrill voice of Miss Ledboro. "According to all one hears."

"Mrs. Sterland is thinking us sad gossips," remarked a third voice. "But we must beg a little indulgence to-day; this is an exceptional occasion. Dear Mrs. Sterland, you must indulge us this once. Lord Clarges has always been such a favourite with most of us here. *You*, I know, disapprove of him on principle, but *you* are above all human foibles! *We* are only silly, weak women, and, I am afraid, are inclined to like an agreeable young nobleman none the less because he has the reputation of being rather wild."

Mrs. Sterland smiled and shrugged her shoulders.

"It is the way with most women, I believe. Well, I suppose I must not put a veto on gossip on this occasion. I was prepared for but little work being done to-day. Ever since we sat down, I have been wondering who would start Lord Clarges' engagement, and was only astonished that the subject was so long delayed."

While the needles click in the vicarage drawing-room; while small garments grow, fast or slowly, as the case may be, in creative hands—and the gossip touching Lord Clarges' recently-announced engage-

ment flows on—we will put on our magic glasses to read the heart of that plain, sensible, busy, capable woman who rules the Dorcas parties as an autocrat, and to whom the female portion of Meadowbury looks up with reverence as its leading, guiding spirit.

As briefly as may be, we will trace the growth from childhood of a strong and singular nature—a nature on which the conflicting influences (as widely severed as the poles) of outward circumstances and of its own inward bent had worked through childhood and through girlhood, till, when womanhood was reached, that nature stood alone, a marvel, a monster, and, in her rare moments of weakness, even a terror to its possessor.

Jane Foskett, when first competent to look round her little world and to think coherently thereon, had found herself the sole companion of a kind but strict and austere father. At a very tender age the little Jane found that many duties and many virtues were expected of her. She early showed unusual intelligence and good sense; her duties were seldom ill-performed. Through the week her lessons were punctually prepared for the governess who daily visited the vicarage. On Sunday, in her plain little dress and sober headgear, she sat in solitary state in the vicarage pew, and listened to a sermon that was but an elaborate and complex form of the sermons she daily listened to from the parent who strove so ceaselessly, in his somewhat cold, stern way, to guide her young feet into the "narrow way that leadeth unto Life."

But there were many thoughts, many impulses, the rudimentary forms of many a formidable passion striving dimly, unseen, unguessed at, in the heart of that prim, reserved child, who was held up as a pattern to her compeers.

Perhaps the person who had oftenest caught a glimpse, or might have done so had she possessed the requisite insight, of the strange nature that lay beneath the child's impassive outward demeanour, was the governess who had taught her in her early youth. Jane Foskett was about ten years old when, one morning, after a lengthened survey of her features in her own little mirror, she betook herself to her schoolroom, with a grave and preoccupied air, at the time her governess was wont to appear. She set to work in sober, painstaking fashion; the lessons prepared for Miss Brown were shown and their few mistakes corrected, and the day's tasks were begun. It was when she had finished her English dictation and was writing out twelve times, according to custom, the correction of her one mistake ("paralell") that the thoughts which for an hour had been germinating in the child's brain blossomed into speech. She looked up from her slate and fixed a steady eye on her young teacher.

"Miss Brown," said little Jane; "am I pretty?"

The voice, manner and face were so earnest, so inquiring, so

unchildlike, that Miss Brown, instead of finding a ready reproof for juvenile vanity, returned her pupil's gaze, fairly disconcerted.

"Dear me, Janie!" said the young governess when she found her tongue; "little girls shouldn't trouble about such matters. The question you should ask yourself, and try to answer satisfactorily in your conduct, is, 'Am I a *good* little girl? Am I a sensible, industrious, obedient child?'"

The pupil kept her gaze steadily fixed on her teacher through this speech, and when it was done, said with a little gesture of impatience: "Yes, I know all about that, Miss Brown; but please answer what I asked you: am I pretty?"

Miss Brown, fairly brought to bay, looked at her little pupil and quietly answered:

"No, you are not, my dear."

The colour flashed up into the child's face, and faded as quickly to her usual dull pallor; she drew a deep breath. "No," she said to herself; "I am not pretty; I knew I was not. I am ugly."

Miss Brown was about to deny the justice of so harsh a description, but the child interrupted her and, fixing her steady eye again on the governess's pink and white face and fair hair, said:

"*You* are pretty, aren't you, Miss Brown?"

Miss Brown blushed and half smiled under her young pupil's steadfast regard.

"*Some* have thought me so, perhaps," she answered laughingly and with a scarcely perceptible glance downwards at a modest pearl ring that shone on one of her fingers; "but, dear me, Janie, what an odd mood you're in to-day! You really must turn your attention to your lessons. It is not often that I have to say such a thing to you, I allow. Don't trouble your head as to whether you're pretty or not. Try to grow up a clever, sensible, useful woman—they are more wanted than beautiful women."

"Are they?" said the child in her shrewd precocity. "Whether that's so or not, they're not so happy. The best thing for a little girl is to be pretty and to grow up a beautiful woman. But I know—I knew long ago—that I am not pretty; that I am ugly; and I know that fretting about it would only make me uglier, and would make me ridiculous; so I mean to be sensible and useful."

The child spoke bravely, and her governess did not know of or guess at the slow, hot tears that welled up in her eyes but did not overflow, as she bent once more over the correction of the one mistake—"paralell"—which she had made in her English dictation.

As the child Jane Foskett stepped gradually up the years to womanhood, outwardly so staid and grave and busy, so content with her life of sober responsibilities and endless duties, did this half-formed secret mutiny against the lot that nature and fortune had decreed for her droop and die?

How should it?

If the *child's* heart had held a deep-hidden passionate longing for the personal beauty that had been denied her and for a life other than that lived by the Vicar of Meadowbury's pattern young daughter, how much more did that of the maiden entering womanhood!

To be seventeen—to have an unusually gifted, richly-endowed woman's nature—and to be plain! To be just entering womanhood without its great inheritance—a bare and bankrupt estate! Only a woman can tell us how hard that is! Only a woman can tell us of the pathetic, searching gaze directed at the too truthful mirror by eyes just opening on womanhood and viewing for the first time how fair an empire it might be! Only a woman can tell us of the heart-sickness with which those young eyes have turned from the unpleasing reflection their gaze has met—of the sad cry that has followed, unheard by all save her who gave it utterance:

"I have missed woman's first, best, sweetest gift! What can life hold for me!"

At seventeen, Jane Foskett, the accomplished young housekeeper; the clever, capable, sensible young woman, her mind as free from girlish vanities and folly as her dress; to whom already the female members of the Rev. Andrew Foskett's flock began to look up and defer vastly; to whom the "churchworkers" already came for advice and information; whose management of her own particular district, and whose performance of her various duties as secretary, treasurer, or president of Dorcas Meetings, Mothers' Meetings, Bible Classes, Missionary Schemes, were a marvel; whose character and deportment won her the observance and respect rarely accorded to a woman ten years her senior—at seventeen, Jane Foskett was a power in Meadowbury.

Mothers would say to vain, flighty, idle daughters:

"Ah! If you would try to take a leaf out of Miss Foskett's book! She's only a young girl herself, but does she ever think of whether she's pretty or not? Does she ever waste time in gossip about dress and admirers? Not she! she has a soul above such things. See how plainly she dresses and does her hair! I've heard that she's busy from morning till night with household duties and church work, and that what little leisure she ever gets is spent improving her mind. There's a pattern for you!"

A pattern? Ah, Jane Foskett! Who is this seated before her mirror in her bedchamber at night? Who is this viewing the face that mirror reflects? A plain face; not startlingly ugly—not grotesque or conspicuous in its faultiness; not one of those faces (do they exist out of novel-land?) which, from inclining to be frightful in childhood, expand in some mysterious way into beauty in womanhood; simply a plain face, long and narrow, with straight features, a dull, colourless complexion, large pale eyes, and pale brown hair put smoothly away. What though there was will in the

straight, firm mouth and long, flat chin, and rare mental qualities behind the full round temples! how many care to seek for any qualities, good or bad, in a plain female face!

Where was the bloom, the sparkle, that seventeen should see reflected in her mirror?

Ah, Jane Foskett; pattern girl; sensible beyond your years; without one girlish vanity or foible—who is this turning from that mirror with a gesture of passionate loathing? Again, who is this casting herself down upon her little white bed, and crying in despair:

"Oh! If I might never see that hated face again! Oh, to be beautiful! Oh, to be beautiful!"

It was when Miss Foskett was eighteen or nineteen that one day in late summer the widowed Lady Clarges drove over to Meadowbury vicarage. She had resided abroad for some years and was almost a stranger to many of the Meadowbury folk. Her business at the vicarage was to beg Mr. Foskett to undertake the coaching of the young Baron, her son, in the amount of scholastic lore requisite for a subaltern in a cavalry regiment. This arrangement would obviate the necessity of an immediate parting between the young peer and his doting mother, who was obliged to spend the next few months at Clarges Park. Mr. Foskett, in his earlier career, had been very successful in preparing young men for the army. Of late years he had dropped the employment in favour of more clerical and congenial pursuits, but a request made in such gracious terms by Lady Clarges, to whose late lord the Rev. Andrew owed his present living, was granted as a matter of course.

An extract from Jane Foskett's diary will give us a better idea of the visit than we can otherwise arrive at:

"July 20th.—Lady Clarges, who returned from abroad last week, drove over to see my father this morning. She wishes him to undertake the coaching of young Lord Clarges for the army. Of course papa consented, though he has given up that sort of thing for some years now. After their business was settled satisfactorily to Lady Clarges (I won't say to my father), he invited her to remain to luncheon in response to a gracious hint. Perhaps I can guess why she elected to honour us with her presence at luncheon. She wished, I think, to see and make acquaintance with the Vicar's daughter, and to ascertain beyond a doubt that the account she has heard of that young person is correct and that she is quite plain enough and sensible enough to make her a desirable mistress of the house to which my lord is to come to be coached.

"The luncheon was unpretending, but was faultlessly served, as I flatter myself *every* meal is at Meadowbury vicarage. Her ladyship was wonderfully gracious. Spoke much to my father of old times and of the late lord's friendship for him. She took stock of me through her pince-nez, and was apparently satisfied, after a very brief

inspection, that I was precisely the sort of young woman she had wished to find mistress of the vicarage.

"And of course I was very pleased to fit in with her ladyship's views and cause her no anxiety or discomfort of mind, was I not?

"No! I was foolish and unreasonable enough to be, for a moment, violently and bitterly angry at the complacent air of satisfaction with which she concluded her review of my plain, grave face, and at the kind, gracious tone in which she said:

"'You must forgive me, my dear Miss Foskett, for taking such an obvious interest in you, but I have heard a good deal about the Vicar's model daughter, who puts all the young ladies of Meadowbury to shame.'

"Just for one moment the fierce longing that I often feel for all those advantages that have been denied me came over me with almost intolerable intensity. Oh! to have had some of those feminine attractions that this woman had feared to find! to have been able to cause her mother's heart some anxiety by the possession of charms likely to be dangerous to a feather-brained little lordling! Not that I sigh for the admiration of such as Lord Clarges, who, by all I can gather, is an empty-headed little dandy, and who is certainly not of imposing appearance, if I may trust the one distant glimpse I have had of him. But I long for the *power* of beauty—the power to scorn, perhaps, as much as the power to please!

"In the course of luncheon Lady Clarges spoke much of her son, and took occasion to inform my father that 'dear Clarges is *very* clever, but wants application'—by which I suppose we may understand that 'dear Clarges' is pert and shallow and barely knows his alphabet! He is to ride over twice a week to read with my father, beginning next Thursday."

On that Thursday evening, before retiring to rest, Miss Foskett made the following entry in her diary:—

"Another day gone! Another day of hard work and constantly succeeding duties, performed, I think I may say, as punctually as if I loved them. What a large 'if' that is! and how little does my admiring and approving world guess the fact! Well, I hope I am playing creditably the part that I have so obviously been cast for in the drama of life. As the daughter of a highly respected and influential clergyman, my *spiritual* rôle has been assigned me from infancy; as a hard-favoured young female, in whom girlish vanities and follies would be out of place, I have assumed my *temporal* rôle. It is clearly not my place to entertain a single doubt about any of the ordinances of Mother Church. Still less about more fundamental articles of our Faith. It is my duty to exhort the young girls in my district to prepare for confirmation by sober and serious thought—to banish dress and admiration from heads on which the Bishop's hands will soon be laid. It is my duty to speak to the old and the sick of

'the peace that passeth understanding' when that peace is far enough from my own restless, burning heart.

"The people talk of me as the Vicar's good, clever, sensible daughter, busy in works of usefulness and charity from morning till night, never 'weary in well-doing.' And if I spoke out all the truth I should answer, 'Good people, I am but playing with tolerable correctness the part for which nature and fortune have so evidently cast me upon the world's stage.' Ah me! a weary part! But some day—some day—the curtain will fall!

"Lord Clarges came to read with my father to-day. He remained to luncheon. The manner of our introduction was this. At one o'clock I was availing myself of an *almost* spare half-hour before luncheon to do some plain sewing. I was seated in the little summer-house stitching away and thinking that it would presently be time to go in and see that the table was as faultlessly appointed as it should be, when a footfall sounded on the gravel path outside and a shadow fell across the sunshine that streamed into the little arbour. I looked up. A young man of the middle height, wearing riding-dress, had paused at the trellised archway beside me. He took off his hat; I rose and held out my hand. 'Lord Clarges, I believe.' 'Miss Foskett, I have no doubt.' Our hands parted after a brief acquaintance, and I reseated myself.

"'I ought to apologise for intruding upon your green bower, Miss Foskett. I have just been set free from my tasks and came out into this sunny garden to clear my poor brain.'

"I said I hoped we were to have the pleasure of his company at luncheon. He said I was very kind—Yes, he believed his studies were to be prolonged into the afternoon. He feared I should get very tired of seeing him before his course of instruction was finished.

"I don't know what answer I was expected to make. All I did was simply to smile as I continued my needlework.

"Lord Clarges seated himself on the rustic bench facing me. A short silence between us was broken by his saying gravely 'Thank you.'

"I looked up from my work questioningly, and received my first real impression of the young baron of Clarges Park. It was not a handsome face opposite me, with its thin, brown cheeks, large nose, and small, firm mouth; its only attraction is in expression. Stay, though, it does possess one positive beauty: a pair of large, well-set, dark-grey eyes that, I fancy, if called upon, could say unutterable things.

"After meeting these eyes, which were not saying anything particular just then, with my own for a moment, I looked down again at my work:

"'Why do you thank me?' I asked.

"'Because you are exactly what I had imagined you would be. I have heard of you, Miss Foskett, as the most wonderful, the most

faultless, the most sensible of young ladies; and straightway my imagination set to work to conjure you up; it is a trick of mine to conjure up anyone I have heard much about. Sometimes the reality has been very different from my notion, which gives one, metaphorically speaking, a kind of slap in the face, and wounds one's pride not a little. But *you*—you are so precisely what I had imagined, that I find it most soothing to my mental vanity, and I thank you.'

"'That is to say,' said I silently, in the depths of my heart, 'you *expected* a fright and a dowdy, and you have found one!' Aloud I said: 'Since Lord Clarges has done me the honour to draw a mental portrait of me beforehand, I am glad I have not given him the trouble of effacing it.'

"He laughed a little. 'Now I consider that there is a decided touch of satire in that speech,' he said; 'but I was not altogether unprepared for a satirical tendency in the model young lady, especially when brought in contact with so frivolous a character as myself. I fear, Miss Foskett, that as our acquaintance ripens, you will learn to contemn me utterly.'

"I was determined to punish the slight trace of mockery perceptible in this speech, and therefore answered:

"'I have not much time for contemning; I am always so busy.'

"'Of course! Always so busy in works of usefulness and charity! That garment you are now at work upon is for the heathen, no doubt!'

"'It is part of my contribution to our club for supplying the aged poor with warm clothing next winter. We shall distribute the clothes at Christmas, and coals too, I hope.'

"'Admirable! most admirable! I fully appreciate the kindness of heart that prompts you and your fellow-workers, and shall be delighted to contribute to your funds. But, speaking seriously, is it advisable to make the old people so very warm just at Christmas? Consider the matter, now, from a philosophic and dispassionate point of view.'

"Before I could reply to this flippant speech, the luncheon-gong sounded. I rose, folded my work, and Lord Clarges and I adjourned to the house.

"Summing up this first day's impression of my father's pupil, I may say he is not quite what I expected from his mother's 'dear Clarges is very clever!' He is inclined to be what little boys call 'cheeky,' it is true; but there is real cleverness, I think, underlying his cool, self-possessed, faintly quizzical manner. My father says it is rather difficult to fix his attention to his tasks, which I can quite believe."

For some months Lord Clarges continued his visits to his reverend coach. Then Mr. Foskett's conscientious, painstaking instructions to

his bright though rather inattentive pupil were rewarded by the latter's obtaining a Second Lieutenant's commission in the 12th Canterers.

During the period of his visits to Meadowbury vicarage, it was scarcely possible but that some sort of friendship should grow up between the young Baron and Miss Foskett. Not that Lady Clarges' complacent satisfaction, as she had first scanned the plain face of the young mistress of Meadowbury vicarage, was destined to be disturbed. Miss Foskett had not a trace of those attractions which such a youth as Evelyn, Lord Clarges, demands in woman. But he grew to have a certain respect for and interest in a character new to him: that of a young woman in her first youth, capable of living her life in a dignified, useful, cheerful manner, without apparently one regretful or envious thought towards those charms she had so utterly missed, and equally apparently as little in danger of succumbing to the young Baron's fascinations as he was of discovering any such in her.

On this footing a kind of friendship grew up between them. Beneath his teasing treatment of her as a paragon of goodness and cleverness, the tone he generally adopted towards her, there lay a very real belief in her excellent qualities. Beneath her calm, reserved, self-possessed manner, her cool indifference to him and half-contemptuous reception of his teasing nonsense, who shall say what sentiments lay hidden?

The days of his coaching came and passed, and the vicarage knew him as a pupil no more. But, as the 12th Canterers were then stationed at M——, not fifty miles from Meadowbury, and as Lady Clarges must perforce see her darling frequently, it happened that Second Lieutenant Lord Clarges often ran over to Clarges Park. During these visits he would occasionally ride to the vicarage to pay his respects to his some-time tutor, and to ask Miss Foskett, in confidence, whether she had yet developed any refreshing feminine weaknesses, or was she still the paragon that the young ladies of Meadowbury were straining every nerve to live up to? He generally received a snubbing in return for this query.

Since the time when her education was considered finished, Jane Foskett had not had much leisure for reading. Her multifarious duties occupied her almost the entire day. But what little time she could spend in her father's well-stocked library, her keen, vigorous, gifted mind made the most of.

And who among her circle of acquaintances would have guessed what class of works chiefly attracted the Vicar's sensible, prudent, model daughter? Who, in the Meadowbury world, would have believed that the works which had the most potent and irresistible fascination for Jane Foskett were those of the early mystics?—works which found a place on the Vicar's shelves only in their quality of rare editions and literary curiosities, but which, since she had first

dipped curiously into their contents, had occupied a very different place in his daughter's estimation.

As has been already said, the character of Jane Foskett would, from early childhood, have presented a singular, nay, almost a portentous combination to an eye, had such existed, able to pierce beneath the outward crust of reserve, prudence and strong common-sense which made up so large a measure of the Jane Foskett known to the world, and to view the passionate, imaginative self that lay beneath.

A strong will, and a keen sense of the fitness of things, enabled her to play the part, as she herself phrased it, for which Nature and Fortune alike seemed to have "cast" her; but an imagination as strong as that will had, from tender years, enabled her in her portions of leisure to escape from the world that surrounded her, and to play a very, very different part upon life's stage.

What so gifted a mind might have accomplished, had its owner had the inclination to turn its powers in the direction of the Arts, will never be known—much, undoubtedly. But that owner had no wish or care to use gifts that, with growing years, she felt to be unusual for any purpose save her own strange, solitary delight.

The more strenuously the will was set to perform so faithlessly the many duties of the day, the stronger and more unrestrained was the flight of the fancy when the moment of release came.

With the instinct that wisely or unwisely draws the mind to congenial food, she had been led to peruse, first curiously, then eagerly, those mystical works of the Middle Ages that it was her duty to dust, along with their hundreds of fellow-volumes in the library.

The knowledge of Latin, which she owed to her father's careful teaching and her own bright faculties, stood her in good stead over those dim, mouldered volumes.

And as, in growing girlhood and young womanhood, she devoured those works in her scant leisure, stronger and ever stronger grew the conviction, first perhaps created, certainly fed, by those dim pages —conviction to be hidden deep, deep in the heart that was unknown to all save herself and God, that in her mind and nature; her own, Jane Foskett's; lay, in all their dazzling, dread array, those qualities, the stern will, the vivid, daring imagination, the proud faith in self, that from time immemorial have produced the wonderworkers called sorcerers by an elder world.

And so, outwardly the model young woman who, in the language of the gossips of Meadowbury, was a pattern to her sex; inwardly a being from whom those gossips would have started back in terror and amazement; Jane Foskett stepped up the years.

When she was one-and-twenty her father died. Miss Foskett had been engaged for some months then to the Rev. Alfred Sterland, her father's curate, and their marriage was to take place soon.

On the living of Meadowbury falling vacant, Lord Clarges

bestowed it on Mr. Sterland, and announced the fact to Miss Foskett in a characteristic letter, headed "Bachelors' Club," which was as follows :—

"Dear Miss Foskett,—The sad event of two months ago, of which, having been abroad, I have but newly heard, and on which I beg to offer my sincere sympathies, gives me the opportunity of bestowing the living of Meadowbury on Mr. Sterland, who, I learn from my mother, has had the audacity to propose to, and the luck to be accepted by, the most admirable young lady in the three kingdoms.

"Do not thank me—it is *I* who must thank *you!* Years ago I thanked you for answering so exactly to the mental portrait I had drawn of you before we met. The same intellectual vanity prompts me now to thank you again. Do you remember, in one of my impertinent moods, I once assured you that you would marry a curate of your father's and would most likely live on at Meadowbury vicarage, as model a wife as you had been daughter? How can I thank you sufficiently for the delicate compliment you have paid me in fulfilling my prophecy to the letter!

"And now, in conclusion, let me ask your forgiveness for the nonsense in this letter. That you *do* forgive me will be shown by your accepting the accompanying little trifle which I send with best wishes for your happiness. "Very faithfully yours,

"Clarges."

"The accompanying little trifle" was a handsome clock which was destined, after the young couple took up their abode at the vicarage, to occupy a place on the library mantelpiece.

Miss Foskett's private sentiments as to her marriage may be gathered from the following entry in her diary—that diary that reflected a self so little guessed at by her world—made the night before her wedding.

"To-morrow I am to marry Alfred Sterland. Two months ago ended my career as model faultless daughter—to-morrow begins my career as faultless model wife.

"After my father's death it would have behoved me to take a situation of *some* kind, and I suppose a situation as *wife* has advantages over most others—for the situation of *clergyman's* wife, too, I am so thoroughly fitted! I know the duties of the 'place' by heart.

"But why am I telling myself all this? Is it to justify myself *to* myself for a marriage in which my heart feels no interest? Scarcely, I think. True it is, I am marrying in as heartless and reprehensible a way as any of those faulty women to whom I have been thought so superior. But did *I* ever think myself superior to any *one* of my sex? Never, I can honestly avow! Deep down in my heart, hidden but formidable in their hidden strength, I view every vanity,

every folly, every passion, with which poor over-lauded, over-execrated woman's nature was ever cursed !

"No ; if I feel shame and disappointment at to-morrow's culmination of my career (that is the phrase the world applies to a woman's marriage), it is because all those wonderful powers the possession of which has been my ambition and my dream—which sometimes I have even dared to think my own—have not been able to save me from the dreary and contemptible lot of most women. But, patience ! patience ! Such powers as I have dreamed of, such powers as I deeply and secretly believe are conferred by stern will, by living imagination, and by intense faith in oneself—such powers, I say, never, or most rarely, do alter the outward lot that the half-blind world calls our life ; they exist for the secret consolation and rapture of their owners."

The day after making this singular entry in her diary, Jane Foskett gave her hand to the Rev. Alfred Sterland. Between that day and the afternoon of the Dorcas party with which this story opened lay five years—five years in which Mrs. Sterland's fame as housewife and Vicaress had even eclipsed that of Miss Foskett.

The Dorcas party was over and the workers had departed. It was the dusk of a Spring evening. The Rev. Alfred Sterland was abroad in the parish, busy with his duties. The vicarage was very quiet. Mrs. Sterland was enjoying a rare half-hour of idleness in the library. In the dusk the firelight glowed over the book-lined walls. Thrown down in a low easy-chair in the shadow at the corner of the hearth was the hardworking, indefatigable Vicaress. Her head leant wearily on the back of her chair, but her eyes were not closed.

Her thoughts had been with the chattering Dorcas party lately dismissed, and as she mused on all their tiresome gossip over the newly-announced betrothal of Lord Clarges—"an agreeable young nobleman," as one of them had said, "of whom dear Mrs. Sterland disapproves on principle"—a weary sigh escaped her.

"Let me put it all from me," she murmured; "as I can so well."

She took up one of the old volumes that lay open beside her, and as she bent forward, and the firelight glowed upon the yellow page, she read once more in Van Helmont's mystical Latin a passage she had marked in the margin, and which she had long known by heart:

"*The will is the first of all powers, for through the will of the Creator all things were made and put in motion. The will is the property of all spiritual beings, and displays itself the more actively in them the more they are freed from matter.*"

From Van Helmont's page she turned to that of Paracelsus—"the divine"—and the red firelight glowed on another mystic passage in the same strain, marked by her pencil, which had thus translated it in the broad yellow margin :

"Jane! My dear Jane!" The Rev. Alfred Sterland was bending in much alarm over the half-reclining form of his wife.

"*Faith must confirm the imagination, for faith establishes the will. Determined will is a beginning of all magical operation.*"

With her elbow on the old open volume in her lap, her chin resting on her hand, Jane Sterland sat, in fixed abstraction, gazing out before her.

"*It rises before me,*" *she whispered,* "*the face and the form that my fancy created long since; that my will is striving ever more strongly and successfully to project and endow with my life and my intellect. It rises before me more clearly, more vividly.*"

"Jane! My dear Jane!" the Rev. Alfred Sterland was bending in much alarm over the half-reclining form of his wife. No signs of consciousness showed themselves, though Mrs. Sterland did not appear to be in an ordinary swoon.

The Rev. Alfred, in increasing alarm, dashed water on the pale forehead, and rang the bell for assistance. But now the eyes, which had been open and fixed, moved and looked at him, and the head was raised.

"I am better, Alfred; do not call for help."

"My dear, what was the attack? What have you been doing to yourself?"

The cold grey eyes were looking at him. "I fell into a doze and felt faint, I suppose."

"You are overworking yourself," said the Vicar, still grave and concerned. "When you *do* snatch a moment of leisure, you take the opportunity of fainting. Have you any idea how long your attack lasted?"

"Not very long," answered Mrs. Sterland, now able to rise and replace in the dark nook of their proper shelf the volumes she had been reading. "Not very long. The Dorcas ladies did not leave till half-past six, and then I came in here for a little rest."

And as she spoke, the silver chime of the clock upon the mantelpiece—the clock that had been a wedding-gift from Lord Clarges—told out seven.

PART II.

Lord Clarges was about to bring his bachelor life to a close. At seven-and-twenty, having for more than half-a-dozen years run the gauntlet of the gay world, this quarry, among others, had been run to earth by the hunt that yearly surges, for three summer months, through Belgravia and Mayfair, armed only with bright eyes, cloudy laces, and fluttering fans. At the feet of the Lady Mildred Mortimer, the Earl of Widelands' pretty young daughter, the young Baron had laid his coronet, his lands, and his slightly damaged heart.

It was May now, and the wedding was fixed for the beginning of July, while town would still be full. The "function," as the fashionable cant runs which thus describes everything from a "private view"

to the burial of our nearest and dearest, was to take place at one of the Chapels Royal, and society was expected to muster strongly on the occasion.

In the meantime, Lady Mildred, with a satisfied smile on her pink and white face, and the ring that ends all girlhood's cares flashing on her finger, went to balls and dinners and races, and anticipated, with considerable pleasure, the time when she should emerge for ever from the shelter of mamma's ample wing, and, as Lady Clarges, enjoy the dignity and freedom of matronhood.

While the bride was thus happily employed, her groom was busied "setting his house in order" in preparation for the coming event—not, perhaps, without a sense that it was a melancholy, even a tragic, necessity—in fine, winding up his affairs as do all gay young sparks, his fellows, when about, as regards bachelor life, to commit suicide.

In his rooms in the Albany, those rooms that by-and-bye he was to exchange for a regulation town-house where Lady Clarges could give her parties, the young Baron sat over a late breakfast. The table was strewn with correspondence, much of it of a business kind, having regard to his matrimonial arrangements. His lordship had made but a slender meal, and, in his gay dressing-gown, was now leaning back in his chair. He was very little changed since the day, eight years ago, when Jane Foskett had looked up from her plain needlework in the arbour of the vicarage garden and beheld him at her side. The description she had written of him in her diary then would have been tolerably exact now. He had looked older than his years then. Time, on the principle of saving itself trouble, perhaps, had set somewhat precocious marks on his face in early youth, and had not taken much pains with him since. There was the same thin, dark face, smooth-cheeked, and boasting but a slight moustache above the small, firm mouth—the nose, too large for beauty and deviating from classic models, but full of character—the eyes large, dark-grey, steadfast, beneath their drooping lids; not a handsome face, certainly, but, to those who knew it and understood it, a face not wanting in potency and fascination.

"Milly must have parted pretty freely, poor child, to give me this," mused Evelyn, Lord Clarges, as he took up a small oval case, of size convenient to the waistcoat pocket; which case, opening by a spring, disclosed a miniature of his fiancée set round with pearls. The little present had been sent to him that morning together with a loving little note.

"Milly must have parted pretty freely to give me this." The young Baron continued to gaze upon the face which the pretty little trinket portrayed, musing half aloud the while.

"A very truthful likeness, certainly! But hers is one of those faces of which a good likeness *can* be got. Yes, my little Milly, I mean no disparagement of your charms when I say that you owe your beauty, as all girls of our class do, to correctness of feature.

For *expression*, we must go to the pretty plebeians—and expression is what every kind of portraiture muffs so!"

Again he was silent for a space, and again his musings presently found speech as he continued to gaze on Lady Mildred's "counterfeit presentment."

"She's a pretty little thing, and a gentle little thing, and will make a good little wife, I have no doubt. Heigh-ho! If one *must* marry, as I suppose one must, matrimony presents its *least* terrible aspect in little Milly, perhaps! As to loving her very madly, well, it's possible I've done all my loving; and on the other hand, it's possible I've never, in all my pretty wide experience, met the woman, and never shall or can meet the woman, lovely enough and fascinating enough to deserve all the love that I fancy I could give. Beauty worshipper that I am, I have never yet found a shrine, among the many I have knelt at, where I have offered up my whole heart!"

Lord Clarges closed his musings and the little case in his hand simultaneously, and turned to his business correspondence. The first letter that he opened was from the steward at Clarges Park, and concerned the alterations in progress there. The young peer read it through with more than one exclamation of impatience and anger, and said, as he threw it down:—

"I must go down there myself, I suppose, and see that my orders are being properly carried out."

And Lord Clarges proceeded to acquaint himself with the contents of his other letters.

A day or two later, the young master of Clarges Park appeared on his chief estate, to see that the various alterations and renovations in course of progress were being carried out satisfactorily. His lordship proposed to remain two or three days at the Park, and occupied a suite of rooms in a wing that was undergoing but trifling alterations.

The village of Meadowbury looked with respectful interest on this sudden advent of its landlord. The chief personages of the little community offered congratulations on the auspicious event fixed for July.

Among the said chief personages who offered felicitations were the Vicar of Meadowbury and his exemplary help-meet, to visit whom Lord Clarges rode over one morning, remaining at the vicarage to luncheon. He had never abandoned the old teasing, boyish manner in which he had been wont to treat the cool, sensible, faultless Jane Foskett, and he did not fail now to inquire after Mrs. Sterland's endless good works with much expressed wonderment and approval, and, as of old, a good deal of genuine faith in, and possibly admiration of, the good works in question.

On the evening of the day on which he had lunched at Meadowbury vicarage, Lord Clarges, after dining early in his rooms, strolled forth into the park alone, a cigarette between his lips. The workmen employed through the day at the mansion were all gone, and there

was unbroken silence round the great house, and in the wide, leafy park. His lordship took a critical survey of the front of the mansion.

"They're getting on well enough now," said he. "I shan't stay here after Thursday. I ought not to have had to come at all, if Hobson had a head on his shoulders."

He strolled down the grand avenue, and, turning to the left, went strolling and smoking along the broad, quiet, gravelled path that ran right through the park, and was used as a thoroughfare by the few foot passengers from Meadowbury to the little village of Hodgefield at the other side of the park.

It was a fair, still evening in the end of May. The scarlet stain of sunset shone behind the dark clustering trees, amid whose leaves a faint breeze made a soft, ceaseless murmur. The path, broad and smooth and silent, stretched away fair and shining, it might have been to Fairyland. Lord Clarges leaned his back against a tree that stood beside the path, and puffed the fragrant smoke of his cigarette into the balmy air.

"Rather dull here," said Lord Clarges. "Shan't be sorry to get away again. How still it is! Not a soul in sight!"

He had scarcely finished giving utterance to these words, as he leaned against the tree and looked away down the shining path, on which the sunset light was strewn with leafy shadows, when he saw the flutter of a woman's dress in the distance. In sheer idleness Lord Clarges watched the bend of the road at which the whole of the advancing figure would become visible, and amused himself with conjectures as to what manner of woman was taking her solitary way through the park.

"Pshaw! Why waste conjecture on such an uninteresting matter! It *can* only be some red-faced village lass, come perhaps to meet the swain of her choice.—By Jove!"

The last two words broke suddenly off from the rest of the sentence, and were spoken in a tone of agitation and amazement new to the cool young Baron. The figure for which he had been idly watching had turned the bend of the road, and was coming slowly on towards him, the sunset light, subdued somewhat now, falling full on her face and on the crown of glorious bright hair, from which the hood of her loose, dark mantle was partly thrown back. Slowly she came on, a form of perfect symmetry and grace, and, as Lord Clarges' eyes rested on her face, his heart roused to a fierce, wild throbbing, such as no face had ever caused him. He had ample time and opportunity, as she slowly approached him in the summer evening light, to study her every lineament: the grand, sweeping brows, the marvellous, unfathomable eyes enshrined beneath them; the severe and perfect beauty of the face, joined to its lovely depths of expression, and rendered dazzling by the softest and most delicate bloom of first youth.

Where had Lord Clarges ever seen loveliness to be compared with this!

Slowly, gracefully she drew on, and was about to pass him when, almost involuntarily, the young Baron uncovered his head and made her an obeisance. She turned, and for a moment those wonderful eyes looked into his own; then, with an enchanting touch of shyness in her manner, she returned his greeting and passed on.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Lord Clarges again. "I feel as if I had never seen a lovely woman till this evening! Who can she be? I'm afraid I must be guilty of the rudeness of following her." Which, accordingly, at some distance, Lord Clarges did, as far as the grand entrance to the park, at which point, in the approaching twilight and the gloom of the giant trees, he lost sight of the fluttering mantle. He returned to the house in very unusual agitation.

"Who can she be? Where is she staying? How can I get another look at that exquisite face? My poor little Milly! Is it sad treason towards you to say that till this evening I never believed in love at first sight?"

Good part of the following day was spent by the lord of Clarges riding in the neighbourhood of Meadowbury. He said he wished to see the country in its summer beauty, an aspect under which he saw it but seldom. Granting that this was so, there was perhaps another reason, unconfessed save by the keen glances he gave any slight female form visible in the sleepy little village and the roads adjacent.

As evening approached, a strange, unreasonable hope began to take possession of him that the lovely stranger might once more pass through the park. At the same hour as on the previous evening, Lord Clarges strolled forth and, passing down the grand avenue, took his way slowly along the public path that ran through the park. It was as quiet and deserted as usual at this time. The May evening was fair as that which had preceded it. The young Baron bent his steps to the tree against which he had leaned last evening and took up his post there, smoking his usual cigarette.

"I have a strange certainty that she will come," he muttered; "and if she does, what then? Shall I summon up courage to address her? What, Clarges! Can that be *you* talking of summoning up courage to speak to a woman? She is late this evening! I hope she is not going to disappoint me, my Dryad, or Hamadryad, or whatever the Greek poets called those fair pieces of mischief that haunted sylvan spots. No. By all that's lovely, I see her resting on one of the seats up the path. How my heart goes pit-a-pat! I declare I never was taken in this way before, not even in my greenest and most tender youth."

Lord Clarges proceeded up the path towards the seat, resting on which he had recognised the beautiful stranger of last night. He drew nearer, nearer. She turned her head (she wore the same loose, dark mantle, its hood thrown partly back from her bright, clustering

hair), and as she looked at him a blush glowed for a brief moment on her radiant young face, and then the dark-lashed lids fell over those wonderful eyes. Lord Clarges drew nearer—nearer—stopped before her. Where was the assurance that from early youth had characterised his deportment towards the other sex? His bold heart was fluttering, and amid all his newborn passionate admiration of the beautiful creature before him, there was a sort of awe that held him mute.

At length he murmured a greeting; she returned it, and then said, glancing up at him with those soul-thrilling eyes:

"I am speaking to Lord Clarges, I think?"

The name was owned with a deep bow.

"I have been in the habit of walking here in the evening when the great house up yonder was unoccupied," pursued the stranger in tones as soft and low as a June breeze; "I understood that this path was public; but if ——"

Lord Clarges interrupted her eagerly.

"Let me beg you not to finish that sentence—you were going to say something about giving up your visits here. Do not be so cruel! Do not rob me of the sight of the most wonderful beauty that ever—but I forget myself; I humbly beg pardon for my rudeness. Oh! *do* say that you are not offended!"

"Offended?" echoed the lovely stranger, with an enchanting smile that brought a dimple in each soft moulded cheek; she blushed, too, as she smiled, though a certain calm and almost dreamy self-possession that characterised her never seemed disturbed.

"Offended? No! I am unlike other women in much, I believe, but I am not so unlike them as to be offended at admiration."

Lord Clarges contemplated her in silence. Her words, taken alone, had a certain freedom, and, had they been uttered by another woman, might have tempted a young man such as he to an answer more gallant than respectful; but there was a something in her manner of saying the words, a something in her whole air and bearing as those grand deep eyes gazed at the sunset-light between the tree-branches; amid her quiet, sweet calmness was a scarcely hidden consciousness of power that seemed to silence the commonplace effusions of gallantry.

Lord Clarges regarded his beautiful companion in silence, and again in all his passionate admiration of that wonderful face and form, on which prodigal Nature seemed to have heaped every beauty and every grace that early womanhood could wish to possess—again a thrill of something like awe passed through his heart.

"You say you are unlike other women in much," said he, when he at length broke silence; "I wish I might know in what you are unlike them, besides the possession of beauty I have never seen equalled, or even distantly approached."

The stranger regarded him for a moment with a look that had

something of sadness amid all its radiance; then she said, as she turned away her eyes: "It would take too long to tell of all in which I differ from other women, and you would be sadly bored by the recital. Let it suffice that I am unlike them in the *possession* of much, and in the lack of much." Her voice took a melancholy cadence as she uttered the last words, and after speaking them, she rose from her seat and prepared to move away.

With a boyish impetuosity in his speech, Lord Clarges detained her. "I cannot let you go like this. Do—do—tell me something more about yourself! Tell me, at least, by what name I may think of you!"

She paused and turned her eyes on him thoughtfully.

"My name is Sybil," she said slowly.

"A thousand thanks for telling me so much! Some other time I shall beg to know what name follows that sweet dissyllable! Say you will come this way again to-morrow evening, I implore you!"

She blushed, her eyes fell, he could almost have thought she trembled. Rapturous thought! Had he really made any impression on this glorious, this enchanting creature?

"Lord Clarges," she said, recovering her self-possession, "I heard that you were to return to town to-morrow; and the world says that in six weeks' time you will bring home a bride: is it wise, do you think, that you should meet me again?"

The gravity and wisdom (was it mock gravity and wisdom?) that her cherub face assumed as she spoke rendered her a thousand times more fascinating than ever.

"I don't know whether it is wise or not!" he cried. "I must see you again. I can put off my return to London. Say you will come to-morrow evening at this time, or I must accompany you now."

"No, do not do that. You followed me last night and I was vexed."

"Promise me, then, that you will come again, or I cannot let you leave me now."

"I promise," she said softly, and then she flitted away among the trees.

"Now," mused the Baron as he strolled towards the house, "what does all this portend? Am I playing the fool? Am I getting myself into a scrape? Who is she? What is she?"

He threw away the cigarette he was smoking, and broke out with an answer to his own questions:—"I don't care! I never was so knocked over! I never was so hard hit! Heigh-ho! I'm a happy man! Here's my house garnished and set in order for a wedding, and a charming young bride waiting for me! and for the first time in my life I've just found out what it is to be madly in love!"

Lord Clarges did not return to town next day, as had been expected—nor the day after—nor the week after!

Meadowbury had a good deal to say about the matter. Meadowbury had said at first how attentive Lord Clarges was to his bride to come down and superintend personally the arrangements for her reception at the mansion in July. But as days, and even weeks, went on and Lord Clarges showed no inclination to rejoin his bride in London, Meadowbury began to wonder a little and ceased to express quite so much approval of his conduct as a bridegroom.

Miss Ledboro went farther in her condemnation as expressed to the Vicar's wife one afternoon in the vicarage drawing-room :

"Dear Mrs. Sterland, don't you think it a little strange that Lord Clarges stays on at the Park when the place is quite finished, and his marriage is to take place in London in a month? Do you think it looks well?"

"Looks well?" repeated Mrs. Sterland, looking up from her work. "Looks well, Miss Ledboro? I hardly understand you. Lord Clarges remains at the Park, no doubt, because he has not yet completed his arrangements there."

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Sterland! You are so charitable and always shut your ears so sternly against any scandal, even when it is about people you don't at all approve of! But I'm sure you must have heard something of what they're beginning to whisper. Lord Clarges has had the reputation of a gay young man, to be sure ; but just now one would have thought that even he would have behaved differently. Whether his coming down here to see to the alterations at the Park was from the very first a mere pretext, one can't say ; but there's no doubt he's carrying on some sort of affair in a manner very disrespectful to Lady Mildred Mortimer. I can't learn anything very definite, except that he is in the habit of meeting some lady in the park, though who she is and what she is is more than anyone seems able to say."

Mrs. Sterland continued her needlework and her cold face grew a little scornful : "Meadowbury ought not to be hard on Lord Clarges. He has many a time supplied material for the gossip the village loves so well, and it is surely most kind and considerate of him to signalise the close of his bachelor career by providing the dear gossiping little place with the most enjoyable feast it has ever had. For my own part, as you know, I have always considered the subject of Lord Clarges' doings or misdoings as uninteresting as it is unedifying."

But still Meadowbury talked of and wondered at Lord Clarges' prolonged visit to the Park in the face of his approaching marriage in London, and hinted—nay more than hinted—at clandestine meetings and a violent and ill-timed passion for some fair creature ; though Meadowbury in general was as ignorant as Miss Ledboro as to "who she was or what she was."

For once, Meadowbury gossiped with full and sufficient cause—with more cause than, perhaps, in its own heart it quite believed ; for

the rumours of Lord Clarges' ill-timed love affair were vague, and regarding the lady who had made such an inopportune impression on the young Baron's pre-engaged affections, no one seemed able to speak with certainty. But, for once, Meadowbury had rather understated than overstated the case in whispering that young Clarges was slighting his promised bride.

Day by day, as the summer days and summer nights rolled round, the village whispered, and the young bride and her friends in London wondered at the bridegroom's lengthened sojourn in the country. Day by day on Lord Clarges' face and in his altered, varying manner might have been traced the progress of an overmastering passion that was subjugating to itself honour and prudence and duty and the worldly wisdom that had been so emphatically his.

Evening by evening, as those stolen interviews took place in the quiet, deserted park, the profound impression first made on him by extraordinary beauty was deepened by the unusual powers of mind evinced by the beautiful Sybil amid all her girlish coquetries and fascinations; and it is possible that the mystery surrounding her just served to complete and rivet her spell over a mind in which a lively imagination had always claimed a share.

The moon was pouring a flood of silver light over the fair park and the old turrets of the mansion on a warm, hushed evening in early June.

Two figures moved slowly along one of the remotest and most sequestered alleys of the park, and presently emerged into an open space where the mock daylight of the moon found no screen from leafy branches. One of these figures, a shape of exquisite form and proportion, whose movements were all grace, seated herself on a rustic bench at hand and, throwing the loose hood of her mantle right back, so as to leave her head uncovered, turned her face wistfully up towards the serene, unclouded moon and the star-sprinkled sky of the summer's night. The bright, pale radiance streamed into the caverns where lay her glorious eyes; it fell like silver on her broad brow, it touched with mystery the dimpled loveliness of cheeks and chin, and lovingly kissed the carved beauty of her lips. So she sat, gazing silently upwards. Her companion stood awhile in wondering contemplation of her, and then dropped suddenly on his knees beside her.

"My love! My Sybil! I have asked you many times to unfold the mystery that surrounds you, and always asked in vain. My own, I ask no more! Tell me what you will, withhold from me what you will, you are the one love of my life. I never knew love till I saw your face and listened to your entrancing voice. I dare not think of a life without you, though I have known you but three little weeks. Nothing on earth shall separate us! What is a weak, conventional betrothal-tie? What would the bond of marriage itself be? I

would snap it, so! and come to you from the ends of the earth. How I love you, my beautiful! How I love you!"

Kneeling beside her as she sat, he clasped his arms about her slight waist; her lovely head sank gently down upon his shoulder and her thrilling whisper sounded in his ear:

"I loved you before you had ever seen my face."

Then, for a space, they were still: the wide, silent park stretching around them; the groups of dark, giant trees standing hushed and listening on the moonlit sward; the sky of a summer's night overhead.

"What am I," he murmured presently, "that a creature so gloriously gifted should have loved me? Never hint that any obstacle can come between our love and hinder me from possessing you as my very own. I say it shall not! The world's tattle—a ruptured betrothal—they are less than nothing. You shall be mine, beloved, in the face of day. My goddess, my queen, my wife!"

"Never that," she said, raising her face with sudden despair. "Never, never. Oh, my love! look upon my beauty while you can. Tell me of your love while I may listen; hear me confess mine while it is possible. Evelyn! Evelyn! life is so short—so short even at its longest; and my little life is nearly over. It has been such a little life; such a short, short life, and already its close is in view."

Her lover started and looked at her in amazement. "Sybil! what words are these? Your life so short! The life that lies behind you is short, I grant; but you so young, the type of bloom and health, you to speak like that! You are trying to frighten me, my love, my darling."

"No, no; I speak but the truth. Evelyn, is my face fair?"

She turned it up to let the moonlight fall fully on it, and tossed back the wealth of bright, clustering hair from her brow.

"Is my face fair, Evelyn?"

"It is divinely beautiful," he answered.

"Is my shape one of grace and symmetry? Is my voice soft? Does a vivid intellect speak in my words?"

"My own, you have every gift of person and of mind never all bestowed, I am assured, on one sweet woman before!"

"They are all for you," she said, sinking into his arms and raising her lips for his passionate caress. "Evelyn, do you feel the pressure of my embrace? Do you feel my breath warm on your cheek?"

"I do, my adored one!"

"Love me while you can!—love me while you can! The time is short, beloved; the time is short. Our happiness together has been measured but in a few brief scattered hours; but the years are coming, the long leaden years, in which our joys will be but a memory to you, and to me nothing—for I shall no longer be!"

The fashionable world had had a most unexpected meal of gossip

provided for it. The marriage it had been preparing to attend in all state—the most interesting match of the season—that of the dashing young Lord Clarges with the popular belle, Lady Mildred Mortimer, was broken off! Trousseau completed, company invited, wedding-day only three weeks distant, settlements made, Bishop preparing to tie the knot—and, lo! the whole thing was broken off!

There were many versions of the *reason* for the fiasco; and the society journals fattened on the affair, and wove many a spicy paragraph out of it, sprinkled with many a "we could an we would," "*we* know," calculated to "tickle the ears of the groundlings." The version of the matter most generally accepted in Mayfair and Belgravia was, that certain discreditable rumours having reached Lord Widelands as to his prospective son-in-law's reasons for making so long a stay in the country, he had communicated with Lord Clarges and asked him whether such and such rumours were false, which imputed to him conduct that, in view of his approaching marriage, would be peculiarly inexcusable, and might be regarded as a direct affront to his bride and her family; and, receiving no satisfactory answer to this communication, that Lord Widelands had at once broken off the marriage. Certain it was, that the whole thing was at an end.

The widowed Lady Clarges, greatly perturbed in spirit, came down from town to Clarges Park to see her son and expostulate with him, and try to learn the rights, if the word be admissible, of the mysterious and ill-timed love affair that had interrupted an engagement after her own heart.

It was one afternoon during this flying visit that the widowed Baroness drove over to Meadowbury vicarage, *ostensibly* to pay a call, *really* to speak to the Vicar's wife, in whose prudence, reserve, and discretion she had the greatest confidence, on the matter that had brought her into the country.

The afternoon was hot and sunny; but the sun-blinds were down before the drawing-room windows of the vicarage, and it was cool and shady within, where Mrs. Sterland, in neat, plain summer attire, sat at her usual needlework.

The first greetings were followed by a few general remarks, and then Lady Clarges opened the subject next her heart.

"You are an old friend, Mrs. Sterland, and I know I may speak to you safely without reserve. I want to know whether you can give me any information about this miserable affair. I am heart-broken about it. Clarges must be out of his mind to get so infatuated about some country girl, or, more probably, some low adventuress. I cannot get a word from him about her, except that she is the loveliest, the most gifted. Great heavens! what should I do if he were to marry her! I wish her loveliness and her gifts were sunk a thousand fathoms deep in the sea!"

And Lady Clarges rose and paced the room, wringing her hands.

Mrs. Sterland looked at her calmly—the woman who, long years ago, had roused to such fierce anger the hidden bitterness in Jane Foskett's breast by the gaze of approval and complacency with which she had viewed the girl's plain face, at the time the young Baron's visits to the vicarage for study were being arranged.

"I'm afraid I can do nothing to help you, Lady Clarges," she said, in her even voice.

"Oh, but I'm sure you can, my dear Mrs. Sterland," answered the widow, seating herself beside the Vicar's wife, and coaxingly laying her hand on the latter's arm. "In your position you must know something of, have some clue to, this creature: where she is living, where she comes from. If I could but find her and confront her, I would ask her how she *dares* bring misery and trouble into noble houses? I could work on her through fear, perhaps, and get her out of Clarges' way; and then, if he saw her no more, he might forget her, and things might be made up again with Lord and Lady Widelands and dear Mildred. They say she is very lovely, this creature, do they not?"

Mrs. Sterland said she had heard rumours of the stranger's extreme loveliness, and her visitor winced.

The visit lasted some little time longer, Lady Clarges pouring out her grief over the broken-off engagement—the loss of a prospective daughter-in-law who was precisely what she would have wished; the estrangement from the Widelands family, and the coolness of their very extensive "set"; and then, finding Mrs. Sterland unable to help her in attaining the object with which she had called, the Baroness rose to go.

"I am sorry to hear," she said civilly, as she stood facing the Vicaress before taking leave, "that you have not been strong lately. I heard something about alarming fainting fits. I hope it is not quite so bad as that?"

Mrs. Sterland thanked her. "I have not been very well," she admitted; "and have fainted occasionally. The warm weather and a good deal of work are accountable, no doubt."

"You are looking very worn and pale," said Lady Clarges, as the bright light at the hall-door fell on Mrs. Sterland's face. "*Something* is wearing on you shockingly! If the Vicar does not take you away for a holiday soon, he will have you quite knocked up, and what would the parish do then? As to that matter in which I asked your help," she said, lowering her voice as she shook hands, "I am sure if you can help me to what I want—where to find this creature, I mean—you will, will you not?"

And Lady Clarges stepped into her carriage.

Weeks passed away. The story of Lord Clarges' ruptured engagement was quite an old one, and society had found something newer to comment on.

The season was over. Lord and Lady Widelands and their fair daughter were at their place in Scotland entertaining a houseful of guests, before whom Lady Mildred was succeeding tolerably well in concealing her recent wound, which, being a wound less to the heart than to more worldly portions of the young creature's anatomy, was perhaps not difficult to hide.

Lord Clarges still lingered at Clarges Park; and still Meadowbury exercised its long tongue over his inconstancy to Lady Mildred and his apparently undiminishing passion for the fair stranger, about whom the village, with all its unslackened efforts, could learn so little. But a newer theme for the village tongue had been recently presented in the evidently serious ill-health of the Vicar's much respected, indefatigable wife. Mr. Sterland had called in the best medical aid; but neither the local doctors nor the eminent physician, whom the Vicar, much against his wife's wishes, insisted on summoning from London, seemed quite to understand the nature of Mrs. Sterland's frequent seizures—seizures lasting sometimes for hours, and partaking more of the nature of trance than of an ordinary swooning fit—followed, too, by such extreme prostration of strength as seemed, with advancing weeks, to threaten her life.

The village was much concerned. If anyone was beyond the reach of its gossip, it was the Vicar's wife, and Meadowbury showed its concern for her ill-health and its anxiety for her recovery by keeping up a pretty constant cannonade of knocks at the hall-door of the vicarage, and by preparing and carrying thither certain culinary achievements which they hoped might tempt the invalid to eat—though the vicarage cook, in high displeasure and burning contempt, generally bestowed the said culinary achievements on the vicarage cat.

"Sybil," murmured a passionate voice; "my loveliest! I have a dread upon me sometimes that you may weary of me. I have even thought lately that I have begun to notice in your manner, in your ever shortening visits ——"

"Not any lessening of my love," interrupted a soft, thrilling voice. "If my visits are growing briefer, daily—alas! alas!—it is through a hard and cruel necessity. If I am silent and sad oftener than in the first sweet days of our love, it is because I see the time coming—coming swiftly, coming relentlessly—when I must say good-bye to you for ever and for ever."

The time had gone on to August; the speakers were seated on the rustic bench where we have seen them before; the hour was sunset.

"Sybil, why do you torture me with these threats of a parting? You *know* I will never let you go! Sweetheart, I wonder if the time will ever come when I may know something concerning the mystery that surrounds you—so young—so gifted—so lovely!"

"The time will come when you will learn all that is to be learnt, but not yet—not yet! Believe in me while you can!" Her gaze was fixed on him sadly—intently. "Believe in me while you can," she repeated, and when he would have given her many passionate assurances of his faith in her, she turned from him, wringing her hands, and murmuring once again: "Believe in me, love me, while you can."

"My beautiful, say you will fly with me! I am without the shadow of a fetter now. I will carry you abroad with me—as my cherished wife; let the world say what it will! and our life together shall be a dream of love and happiness."

"A dream indeed!" she answered. "A dream never to be realised—never—never!"

"Why do you vex me with these mournful predictions? I tell you I will make you my wife—I cannot live without you! If you love me, you will not let me hear that dreary word 'never' again! I have told you I am going to London to-morrow on necessary business. I shall return here as soon as it is despatched. Will you meet me on this spot at this hour on the third evening from this? I hope, by that time, to have arranged everything for our flight. You will come, will you not, my loveliest?"

She looked at him long and wistfully; the light of sunset fell on the glorious beauty of her young face, and on the splendour of her rich hair. "I will come, if I can," she said.

Lord Clarges was in London. The business that had taken him thither was all but completed, and on the morrow he would return to Clarges Park. It was night, and the young Baron had just entered his sitting-room at Long's Hotel. He had whiled away part of the evening at the theatre, where he had witnessed a play abounding in "battle, murder and sudden death," produced for the delectation of the country cousins who thronged the house.

The fashionable quarters of town were deserted, and quiet reigned in the hotel where Clarges was staying.

"Verily, verily," said the young nobleman, throwing aside his cloak and hat, "town is intolerable in August!"

He mixed himself a glass of whisky and soda from the stand, drank it, and threw himself into an armchair, his hands in his pockets, and his head leaning back.

"I shall see her again to-morrow," he said. "How have I got through these two days *without* seeing her? I shall see her to-morrow, and it will go hard but I carry her off in the course of a few days more!"

He raised his eyes to a mirror opposite him—a mirror that reflected the door of the room; and as he looked, the door was gently pushed open, and a slender figure stood within the room, the lamp-light falling on its lovely face and clustering fair hair.

"Sybil!" shouted Lord Clarges, starting out of his chair and turning round to the door. "Sybil! you here!"

She stood gazing at him, a world of passionate sorrow in her great deep eyes, and on her trembling lips; made one effort, though a futile one, to speak, pressed her two hands to her lips, waved them wildly towards him, and vanished from the room.

The spell that astonishment had cast over Clarges was broken, and he was able to rush to the door. "Sybil!" he cried, dashing out of the room—but no Sybil was in sight. The broad lighted staircase was deserted. He descended quickly to the street. No figure at all like Sybil's was visible in the moonlight. The waiters at the hotel, in answer to inquiries, were quite positive that no one had entered within the last quarter-of-an-hour, with the exception of Lord Clarges himself.

The latter returned to his room somewhat dazed. "I must have dropped asleep and dreamed it!" he said. "It stands to reason she couldn't be here at this time of night. But I didn't know dreams could be so vivid! This will worry me now till I see her again to-morrow. She looked so sorrowful. Can anything be the matter?"

This frame of mind held Lord Clarges all through a sleepless night and still held him the following morning, though the feeling of apprehension left by the vision of the preceding evening grew weaker as the day went on, and weaker still as the train carried him over the sunny, ripe country towards Clarges Park, and he thought of the meeting he had arranged for sunset.

He reached the quiet little Meadowbury station in due course, and there was his groom with the cart awaiting him outside. Lord Clarges stepped round the horse and viewed it, patted it, drew on his driving-gloves, and as he did so the conversation of two Meadowbury ladies, who had just met within a yard or two of where he stood, fell on his ear.

"Well! we shall never get such another, Mrs. Wills! Ah, dear! A model she was in everything! But I've said this long time past she was working herself to death!"

"So you have, Mrs. Belton, and so we all have! But she wouldn't give up any of her duties as long as she could do them. Ah, dear! Meadowbury's a sad place to-day!"

"Has any calamity happened here?" asked Lord Clarges of his servant, mounting into the cart and taking the reins. The man touched his hat.

"It's the Vicar's wife they're speaking of, my lord—Mrs. Sterland—she died last night."

Lord Clarges experienced a powerful and singular shock on hearing the news. He handled the reins mechanically and had driven along a mile or so of road before he was even able to wonder at and think coherently on his sensations; true, she was an old acquaintance

and it was natural he should be grieved to hear of her death; on the other hand, she was *but* an acquaintance, and he had been aware that her health was precarious for some time back; then why this strange and inexplicable feeling? And as he asked himself the question, once more the feeling rushed over him yet more strongly. Then with a sudden bound his thoughts flew to Sybil and the meeting that was to be at sunset, and at the same moment the undefined dread that had followed the vision of last night rose within him—rose higher—higher——

"I will go to the appointed spot at once," said Lord Clarges, as he entered the house. "It is earlier than the time we fixed, but I would rather wait *there*."

He passed into his business-room. On the table lay several letters. He took up one marked "Private" and broke it open while hastily swallowing some slight refreshment; broke it open—drew forth the enclosure which bore the date of the previous day and consisted of several closely-written sheets; his eye fell on the opening words and a cry of agony escaped him. He read on a little further—looked up from the letter—put his hand to his head, gazed wildly about him with a scared and ghastly countenance, then turned to the name signed at the foot of the last page.

"Great Heaven! What is this!" cried Lord Clarges.

A strange and terrible letter indeed for Sybil's lover to read!

"Look for Sybil no more. She is gone—she is dead. When you read this, *I* shall be dead, and therefore *she*—for she was but the emanation of my intense will and vivid imagination, wrought on to work such wonders by the master force of forces, Love—and without me she had never been.

"You *did* love her! You *did* love her! She taught you better what love meant than any woman you have ever met!

"Even with the vastness of eternity stretching to my very feet, *that* thought can bring warmth to my slackening heart! You *did* love her; you do still, my poor boy; and it is to save you from seeking her through the weary world that I write this.

"Hear now the story of a strange Being, who, from childhood, has been an enigma to herself.

"My earliest recollection of myself is a young creature dimly conscious of two selves: an inward self that rebelled against the part that nature and fortune alike seemed agreed she was to play in life's drama; that pined fiercely, passionately, but always secretly, for all that had been withheld. An outward self, quiet, proud, reserved, seeking no sympathy in or pity for her hidden unhappiness, but using a strong will to conceal it and to perform with apparent cheerfulness and unfailing correctness the many duties lying round her.

"My next recollection is of a young girl entering womanhood,

occupying a responsible and difficult position and filling it to the admiration of all around her—the hidden rebellion of her childhood grown so fierce and strong as sometimes in privacy and solitude to tear and rend her like a wild beast—but the will had grown too, and, before the world, it held down the wild hidden nature with a hand of iron.

"And fierce as were my struggles then—sharp as were my never-heard complaints against my lot—so fierce—so sharp—that I often feared my face might tell a tale—I felt that fiercer struggles and rebellions, and sharper agony were in store for me yet. I knew—and what dread the knowledge brought me!—that sooner or later I should love—love as only such natures as mine *can* love—and love unhappily.

"The times in my life when I have fallen on my knees in the solitude of my chamber and prayed—I, so often called on to give guidance to the young and consolation to the dying!—have been few and far between. Yet I remember once in early womanhood as I turned from my mirror, a sudden terrible dread of an as-yet-unknown passion—a passion I might feel but could never awaken—sent me upon my knees crying, 'Oh God! be merciful to me and let me never love! Oh, in pity spare me the anguish that love would bring!'

"Well—my prayer was unheeded. I was spared no jot of the agony I had foreseen, and I hid it, and fared on—seeking my only consolation in the world of my fancy.

"Did I love you from the very first day I spoke to you? the summer's day when you stood beside the little arbour that is still in the garden here, and looked down at me as I sat, plain, sedate and grave, at needlework.

"Yes, I think so; though I would not own it to myself at first. And as the weeks went on, it grew, that love, to a depth and intensity that has never lessened since—never—never! Oh! If you could dimly have guessed what agony it was to me to have you sit beside me, as you did sometimes in those old days, and to know that in your eyes I was the worthy, faultless, plain-faced, model young woman, of whose manifold moral perfections you professed to stand in awe, and on whom no thought of love or admiration could ever linger—if you could dimly have guessed, when I answered your teasing nonsense about my many virtues with a smiling reproof or a touch of sarcasm, how my heart was bleeding and how gladly I would have died for one kiss!

"My circle of acquaintance was not very large or varied in those days—nor, indeed, has it been since—and there have been times when I have asked myself if, had my world been a wider one, you would still have been the object of that love that would, with me, in any case have been misplaced and unhappy?—I have always answered yes. I felt then, I feel now, that out of all the world my

miserable unasked love would still have turned to you—you only—you for ever.

"I have as yet said nothing about those strange powers which I undoubtedly possess, and which you have such ample cause to believe in.

"It was when I was growing into womanhood that I first began to trace in myself certain unusual qualities—my consciousness of those qualities and my belief in their power being aided, though I scarcely think created outright, by what I read in the mystical works of which my father had a number in his library. The perusal of these became, next to the exercise of an extraordinarily vivid imagination, which seemed able to lift me at times quite out of my hated lot, my chief pleasure. But I had never then dreamed of exercising my new-found powers, which were then but young and weak, for anything but my own solitary delight.

"Time went on, and had no power to diminish the secret love that had become part of my nature. I did not stifle it. I did not wish to. Alfred Sterland, then, as you know, my father's curate, asked me to be his wife. He said he had long admired my abilities, and my eminent domestic qualities, as those that would form his ideal of a life-companion. I accepted him. I agreed to bestow on him those abilities and those qualities that he admired. I did not think then, nor do I now, that I wronged him in bestowing nothing more. My heart, my wild, passionate, hidden heart, he knew nothing of, would not have understood; did not want.

"It is only within the last twelve months that the strange faculties I have mentioned have seemed able to affect others beside myself. About a year ago I discovered that my fancy, always vivid and trained from childhood to work at set times for my delight—and my will, also very strong by nature, and also trained by the circumstances of my life, and by my constant system of self-repression to an abnormal strength—were capable, working in concert, of producing strange effects upon those around me.

"I tried certain experiments on one or two of my unsuspecting acquaintances—experiments that it is needless to recount—and then having satisfied myself beyond a doubt that I was really the possessor of gifts that in old times would have sent me to the stake, something like conscience and a dim suspicion that I was meddling with forbidden things caused me to cease my machinations. But only for a time. True, I never renewed them on the Meadowbury people. I had no wish to do so. But gradually the idea grew upon me, till it seemed to absorb my whole being. If I can work such wonders as I plainly can, why not try to realise, to bring into tangible form that face and shape of enchanting loveliness which I have always assumed in those dreams that, almost from infancy, have been my solace in an uncongenial lot. That face and shape had long been real to *me*—by a supreme exertion of my will could I

not project her and make her real to others—to him, for a look of love from whom I would have paid down a hundred lives had I owned them?

"This idea lay germinating in my brain as the months went by, and at last came the news of your betrothal. Outwardly calm and indifferent, I listened to the gossip over it, but my heart burned with a fierce pain.

"'She is very pretty—the belle of the London season,' clacked their tongues, and I said within myself, 'I know a face a million times fairer than hers, a form a million times more beautiful than hers, let her be who she may! A face and a form that if he once saw he would forget her on the instant.'

"Again a short space, and you came down here to see to the alterations going on at Clarges Park. You called on us here at the vicarage and chatted in your old half-boyish fashion. You asked me if Meadowbury had yet canonised me, and when we offered you our congratulations on the 'happy event soon to take place,' you said laughingly to my husband, 'You drew such a prize in the marriage lottery yourself, Mr. Sterland, that your congratulations to anyone about to commit matrimony are peculiarly heartfelt, I suppose.'

"The seeing you again, so long and passionately loved, together with the knowledge that you would soon belong to another, set suddenly in motion the idea that had lain in my brain for months. Something bade me use my powers now, fearlessly, confidently, without heeding the low whisper of conscience. And that very evening, as you strolled in your park at the golden sunset hour, the being you have known as Sybil crossed your path. Sybil, whom you would have made your wife, my poor boy! Sybil, who loved you with *my* love, who spoke to you out of *my* mind, who charmed you with a grace and beauty never seen on this earth before, and never to be seen here again.

"What was she? By what strange law of nature—or by what breaking of the law of nature—did she come into existence? Had she *any* objective being, or was she only the effect of my will and my imagination acting upon yours, and, in a lesser degree, on those of others who profess to have seen her?

"I know no more than you. To me she is a mystery, to me the powers that produced her are a mystery—as to you.

"In that eternity in which we shall 'know, even as also we are known,' doubtless this, among other 'hidden things of darkness,' will be made plain to us.

"Had my powers, only yet in their infancy, I am convinced, been sparingly used, hoarded, trained carefully and jealously, employed at the dictate of science, for useful ends, I feel that I might have been of great good to my fellow-creatures. But I wasted them—employed them continuously as servants of my miserable, misplaced love—and

exhausted my bodily strength within but a short, short time from discovering that I possessed them.

"Often, in the last few days, with the death I have knowingly brought upon myself creeping nearer, nearer, till I feel the clutch of its icy hand, I have fancied that already I stand before the Judgment Seat and hear the voice of an angry God say to me: 'I gave you gifts and powers seldom bestowed on the children of Time. I gave them to you, as I give all gifts and powers, to be employed for wise and useful ends, and you have used them only in the service of a sinful, earthly passion—used them so madly, so prodigally, that the body that should have lasted to old age has withered and perished in its youth! Depart from ME. I know you not.'

"I am dying fast. The constant demands I have made upon my strength to send Sybil forth, evening after evening, to meet you and hear your words of love—oh, rapture! worth the price of a *million* such lives as I have lived!—have brought me down till nothing now can save me.

"You are in London as I write this. When you return hither on Thursday you expect to meet your Sybil at the old sweet, sacred spot, where you will meet her never more. If my strength is equal to the task you will see Sybil in London to-night, though she may be able to do no more than look farewell, and though even *that* will surely cost me my last few sands of life.

"Now, good-bye, beloved, good-bye. Look for Sybil no more. She is buried with me: her grave is in the brain that, as you read this, will already be decaying. And even if for *me* there should be a resurrection hereafter, for *her* there can be none through all eternity.

"JANE STERLAND."

It is years since Lord Clarges read that strange letter.

He left the Park the same day, and, for a long, long time Meadowbury saw him no more.

Lady Mildred Mortimer married well a few months after her disappointment, and is a well-known leader of society.

Lord Clarges is still unmarried, and still has the reputation for being "rather gay" among the Meadowbury folk. But, though his associates are of the gayest, he is not always gay himself. He has fits of gloomy thought that they do not understand, and he will sometimes turn coldly away from the loveliest face looking its kindest, because memory shows him one incomparably fairer which was lost to him in the zenith of his passion.

Last summer, after an absence of years, he paid a visit to Clarges Park. With feelings softened by time, but still painful and indescribable, he visited the scene of his frequent meetings with Sybil.

It was during this visit that one glorious July evening he strolled

into the churchyard that lay round the ancient parish church of Meadowbury, and sloped gently down to a sweet and placid river.

Lord Clarges strayed on among the graves. The rich evening sunlight fell on mossy headstones centuries old, and on the new white tablet that told of a grief not yet healed. At length he found that which perhaps he had been in search of—a handsome marble monument with a bronze railing round it—a monument that bore in gilded letters on its face :—

"In Memory of Jane, Wife of Alfred Sterland, Vicar of Meadowbury. Died August 20th, 18—, aged 27 years, leaving her Husband to mourn his irreparable loss—leaving her own sex without a bright and shining example for their imitation. 'Her price is far above rubies.'"

Long did Lord Clarges stand musing by that grave in the deserted churchyard that summer evening—that grave where was buried the woman whose true nature he alone on earth knew—where were buried startling powers that, if brought to maturity, might have made 'the world grow pale'—where was buried with the unhappy, strangely-gifted Jane Sterland the Being to whom the one passionate love of his often-loving heart had been given. Long did he stand there musing. His gaze wandered across the broad river to the rising meadows at its other side, where cattle came down to drink, and stood in the silvery water, musing as silently as himself.

A little robin, perched on an ancient headstone close at hand, was pouring out his sweetest song to his mate upon the branch of a neighbouring tree.

The river flowed on placidly, past the quiet graves, to lose itself in the ocean, as the lives those graves commemorated had flowed on, placidly or stormily, to lose themselves in Eternity.

The sun had sunk down behind the distant hills when Lord Clarges at length turned away from that grave, and as he did so, he murmured the words of the never-to-be-forgotten letter that had so strangely waked him from the sweetest love-dream he had ever known.

"In that eternity in which we shall 'know even as also we are known,' doubtless this, among other 'hidden things of darkness,' will 'be made plain to us.'"

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.

"MY dear Louis" said the Hon. Mrs. Randolph, "you are in love."

The gentleman to whom this remark was made smiled, but with some confusion betrayed in his face. Involuntarily he cast his eyes round the ball-room until they rested on the fair figure of a young lady who was at that moment engaged in waltzing away from him.

"Come with me to the library," continued his partner, "and tell me all about it. I claim the right as an old friend, cousin, and playfellow to be let into all your secrets."

Taking his arm, she led him to a comfortable corner where they could talk to one another without being disturbed. Hanging on one of the walls of the library was a superb photograph of the mistress of the house, Lady Shottesbroke, to whom Louis Mansfield stood in the relation of nephew.

"Is that one of your beautiful productions?" inquired Mrs. Randolph, as they passed the portrait.

"It is one of mine."

"I have never seen anything in photography to compare with it," was her comment. "You seem to have a genius in that direction. But that is not what we came here for. Now, Louis, I am your father confessor. You are in love, and I must be told all about it."

"It ought to be the other way," he replied. "It is for you to speak; you seem to know more about the secret than I do."

"Prevaricator!" she exclaimed. "You are madly enamoured of a certain person here to-night in blue tulle; someone with soft, wavy, yellow hair, fastened with a diamond spray; someone whose eyes sparkle even more than her diamonds, and whose pearly teeth shame even the magnificent necklace she wears."

"Really, this is most interesting!" said Louis. "It is for all the world like the fairy-tale—the one in which the beggar-boy is consumed by a passion for the princess."

"Don't depreciate yourself, Louis. If there is one thing calculated to make a woman of spirit despise her lover, it is the fact that he is conscious of, and trots out, his own shortcomings. In love, all is romance; all are equal, if they only love one another."

"That is all very well, Mrs. Randolph; but there is no romance about the lack of bread and butter. Assuming that you are right, for the sake of argument, and that I am to forget my poverty, please to explain what good is likely to come of the beggar's wooing!"

"All the good in the world, my dear boy. It will sharpen the beggar's wits. When a great prize is open to competition, the right

course is to calculate on the means of winning it, and not on the possibility of losing it."

"Enterprise is all very well," said the other, "and all very romantic. But does not extreme rashness verge on imbecility? Failure to attain the happiness sought for will, perhaps, be a burden too heavy to be borne. But to come to more practical terms in our conversation, tell me, you who urge me to undertake a forlorn hope, how a stockbroker's clerk like myself can hope to support an aristocratic wife, and possibly a family, on the magnificent rental of two hundred pounds sterling per annum, terminable upon three months' notice at any time?"

"If I had a turn for business," answered she, "I should make a point of excelling in my business, and, if I were you, I would not rest content until I proved myself the best stockbroker in London."

"No doubt you would. You would excel in anything. That is not the way with me, unfortunately. Even if stockbroking were my hobby, I should always be a duffer at it."

"Then give up stockbroking."

"What!' he exclaimed; "and shun 'those ills we have' to 'fly to others that we know not of'?"

"Every man," said Mrs. Randolph sententiously, "has his worth; and every man can do something well, if he only knows what it is. Depend upon it, a man is bound to get on in the world who does what-he-can-do-well as well as he can possibly do it."

"The only thing I can attempt with a decent prospect of success," mused Louis, "is photography."

"Then," said Mrs. Randolph, with an air, "be a photographer."

"Oh—come! that's all nonsense," laughed Louis. "Fancy me with a small shop, and a studio above it, somewhere in Kensington or Bayswater. Oh! it would be dreadful! What would people say? And what would *her* people say?"

"Oh, you men! you men!" wailed Mrs. Randolph; "you haven't an ounce of imagination in your heavy heads. Listen to me for a moment, and think. Here you are—of good family, with rich relations, a man of education, a man of the world, a suitor for a peer's grand-daughter—proposing to set up shop like any bank holiday artist who has made enough sixpences to buy a vulgar little business in the suburbs. You'll never get on."

"I fear not," he groaned. "But I don't understand you—for you yourself suggested that I should turn my taste for photography to business account."

"Certainly. But there is no *art* in this world in calling a spade a spade, in looking at everything from its meanest point of view, or in offering a pill with the bitter powder exposed on the surface. Look around you and see how those men get on in the world who do get on. If they are poor, they hide it by wearing good clothes; if they have lost credit, they boldly ask for more than ever; if there is

nothing doing, they invent business; if they cannot sell you what you want, they will persuade you that you want what they have to sell; if they desire you to help them on in the world, they do not ask you to do so, but invite you to dinner, and a very good dinner, too. If they want to fleece you, they do it so politely that you are positively pleased; and if their contempt for you is only equalled by their longing for your purse, they will pick your pocket while distracting your attention with assurances of their profoundest respect and admiration. The long and short of all this, my dear Louis, is that if you wish to make your fortune as a photographer, instead of leasing a dingy London shop with a cheap-glass fowl house for a studio, you might do well to build a luxurious country villa with a special salon for sitters. Instead of playthings at a guinea a dozen, you would provide the most ethereal pictures, finished in the most artistic style, at a high price. There would be none of the plush-frame-and-kitten sentiment about your pictures and their setting. Instead of keeping people waiting in an odoriferous ante-room, musing sadly upon the specimens of your art in hundreds around them, you would give up your day to one appointment, entertain your visitors royally, give them lunch, with champagne, end up with a run on the river, and drive them in a Victoria to the station."

The conversation was interrupted by the music of the next dance. Louis, who was engaged to the vision in blue tulle, rose abruptly, and led Mrs. Randolph back to the ball-room, while he asked:

"May I have another presently?"

"Alas, no!" she replied; "we are going in ten minutes. Remember what I have said."

"I wish I could see my way," said he. "Good-night."

"Good-night."

History does not record how often during that evening Louis danced with the same partner. Certain it is, however, that, together with the "taking down to supper," the number of occasions had a considerable effect upon his peace of mind. Instead of taking a cab, and hastening back to bed, he strolled slowly homeward in the very early grey of the May morning.

On arriving at his chambers he lighted a pipe, and threw himself back in an arm-chair. As the lazy puffs of smoke curled up, his brain tried to work out the problem of reconciling a certain proposal, which he had made but an hour before, and which had been answered in the gentlest affirmative ever whispered in the fairy land of a conservatory, with the conscience that reminded him of his comparative poverty and lack of prospects in life.

Mrs. Randolph's ingenious attack upon his want of enterprise still rang in his ears, and he felt a sting of reproach attaching to him for not having already made a good position for himself and a career. He asked himself what he had been about all these years. It was humiliating to have to admit that with all his experience of

life, and of people, and of the world in general, he was absolutely ignorant of the one essential piece of knowledge, without which no man could hope to improve his fortunes by his own wits. The question with him was—how to get one foot on the ladder. Many men, he reflected, said that the secret lay in perseverance; others declared it to be a matter of luck; or pretended that honesty was sure to succeed; the multitude depended upon sharp practice; the hopelessly unsuccessful members of society believed it to be a question of interest and time serving; a forlorn few, mostly unsuccessful persons, prated about excellence conquering fortune; but, whichever was the royal road, everyone agreed that you must pursue it with plenty of "cheek."

Louis gave rein to his thoughts, and his imagination ran away with him entirely. What if Mrs. Randolph had suggested the true key to success? He was already a first-class amateur photographer; and with a little more experience, such as he was in a position to pick up rapidly amongst the best professionals of the day, he would certainly be able to produce results equal to anything which had as yet been seen in studios or exhibitions.

There was one fatal drawback. He had no capital. With one hundred pounds to start upon, he was confident he could do wonders. With five hundred pounds to invest, he could open a business with every modern mechanical improvement, and with every certainty of success.

Five hundred pounds! It was not such a very large sum. Could he find a capitalist to advance it? No; that would never do; to begin by borrowing would end by being bankrupt. Besides, no one else would see the probability of a safe return for the money, as he saw it. Many a man might borrow the necessary sum from his relations; but Louis knew his family too well to hope for anything more tangible from them, in the way of help, than cheap good wishes and still cheaper advice.

Though there was no chance of starting with the capital mentioned, Louis still rode off on the steed of imagination. It is so easy to prove one's arguments by granting the conditions. With five hundred pounds he would do as Mrs. Randolph suggested. The scheme grew rapidly in his mind. It all seemed as easy as possible. It could not fail. He would do this, and that, and the other, and the money would roll in, and then—and then—his thoughts reverted to the bewitching strains of Waldteufel's waltzes, as heard from a corner in the conservatory, in association with something in blue tulle, and ——

Here his faculties fell from heaven to earth! The cause whereof was a professional-looking letter lying upon his table. Curious, that he should have overlooked it on coming in! It could not be of much importance—probably from some infernal tradesman, he thought.

He opened it mechanically. An exclamation came from his lips, and his pipe fell from his mouth.

The letter read as follows :—

"Lincoln's Inn Fields, May 20th, 188—.

"DEAR SIR,—It is with much regret that we have to communicate to you news of the death of your aunt, Miss Margaret Mansfield, at Naples. As the solicitors entrusted with her will, we think it right to mention that the deceased leaves you the sum of one thousand pounds, free of legacy duty, 'in consideration of your constant affection for her.' When the will is proved, the legacy will be paid to you with little delay.

"We are, dear sir, yours faithfully,

"DAVY AND WILLS."

"What an astonishing coincidence!" blurted out Louis. "Poor old Aunt Margaret! She was always kind; but this is the best turn she ever did me."

It seemed as if fate had arranged to take Louis by the hand and lead him into the arms of fortune. His mind was made up. He was not superstitious, and he would obey the suggestion of circumstances—and very willingly too—in the hope of acquiring the means to an even happier end in view, the precise nature of which the reader can guess perfectly well.

The next few weeks flew by like lightning. The idea of carrying on a business such as the one hinted at by Mrs. Randolph developed in Louis's mind with astonishing rapidity; and it would be impossible to follow his whole train of thought here. We will therefore leave to imagination all that took place until Louis found himself ready to commence operations in August.

II.

IF Datchet is not altogether the most attractive place on the Thames, it possesses at least many advantages. There are beautiful reaches, quiet back-waters and picturesque turns, within easy distance by boat or launch. Besides being within a walk of the most magnificent castle in the world, the most royal park and forest, the very interesting and historical Runnymede, "the distant spires" and "antique towers," to say nothing of the playing fields of Eton College, Datchet is near the Slough station of the Great Western main line, and is easily accessible from London.

At the distance of a short walk from the river stands an old-fashioned manor-house, which has now been leased by Louis Mansfield. Tradition says it was once part of a monastery. A quaint, apparently leaning block of building, with many gables, with lattice windows nestling under shadowy eaves, with mellow brickwork and warped timbers, it forms an interesting study in surviving Mediæval architecture. The well-kept lawn, with turf testifying to centuries of

treading down; the placid miniature lake beyond, with its glassy reflections and its graceful reeds and lilies; the tortuous gravel walks through ancient shrubberies, and under timber said to have been a wonder even in the time of the Stuarts; the walled gardens and shady bowers for sentimental idlers—all this, and more than we can enumerate here, served to give a charm to the place which few people, in this age of brick-bat and dust-heap, could fail to be enchanted with.

The beauty of this retreat was one of several surprises which Louis had in store for his first visitors, who were, of course, the Hon. Mr. and Mrs. Randolph.

But if the exterior acted with a spell upon the jaded visitors from noisy and smutty London, what an increased delight for them to examine the interior! Entering by a vestibule sunk below the level of the door, they passed into the hall, a long chamber reaching from the front to the back of the mansion, and lighted by stone mullioned windows. Arched timbers of oak, now black with age, supported a roof hidden in shadow high above the floor. Carved panelling, of equal antiquity, surrounded the chamber; and there were hung and grouped upon it armour and weapons of the days of our forefathers, together with antlers of some extinct race of deer. Down the centre of the stone floor ran a solid table, upon which, no doubt, many an olden banquet had been served. A magnificent stone arch, with carved spandrels, and with a space beneath and behind it large enough to contain a small waggon, constituted the fire-place, where forest logs were wont to burn in winter and to send their grey smoke up the spacious chimney.

Mrs. Randolph's wonder and astonishment knew no bounds, and she was at little pains to hide her feelings.

"My dear Louis," she exclaimed; "I congratulate you! You have so far exceeded the wildest and most extravagant dreams I could have described, that I almost fear I am to blame for the immense impetus with which you have launched your good ship. What a lovely place it is!"

"You have not seen all yet," said Louis quietly.

"What! are there more wonders to come?"

Louis replied by leading her through a low, dark, ancient doorway, and a short, mysterious little passage which took them to the drawing-room.

Of this apartment it is enough to say that it was entirely in keeping with the old-fashioned character of the house. Mrs. Randolph positively sighed with pleasure as she gazed upon the low carved beams of the ceiling, or on an exquisite little window filled with old stained glass; and she threw herself upon the cushions in a window nook, where she felt the soft, autumn breeze, laden with the sweet scent of flowers, and blowing in through the open casement.

Her husband, who seldom waxed enthusiastic about anything, was

generally said to have one weakness: his hobby was "hearth-rugs." Although a man of very few words, he committed himself so far as to pay Louis a compliment on the rarity of two or three Persian prayer-mats upon the polished floor.

"Will you pay a visit to my studio?" said Louis. "I should like to show you over it, and to take advantage of your patience so far as to keep you sitting in one place for five minutes, during which time you will have to forgive me for exacting implicit obedience to the few suggestions I may make concerning your postures and expression."

"Ah, there!" whined Mrs. Randolph; "you are going to spoil the illusion of the day by taking my photograph. Must I sit?"

"You must." Louis smiled as he spoke. "I shall not spoil your illusion more than I can possibly help. You promised to be my first victim, and—horrible though the confession is—your help is indispensable, for I want you to be my advertisement."

"Hang it all!" groaned Mr. Randolph; "if you two people are going to talk shop, I shall go out and have a cigar." He left them and sauntered out by an open door.

"You will help, won't you?" asked Mansfield.

"I will not fail you, Louis," she said sweetly.

"Here," whispered Louis mysteriously, as they entered a beautifully draped and heavily curtained recess—a continuation of the drawing-room—"is *my* sanctum."

"But you cannot take pictures in here!"

"No. They are merely taken *from* here." Whereupon he partly drew back the heavy dark curtains that covered in the place where they stood. He thus exposed to view a graceful open archway, beyond which a flood of white light illuminated a conservatory, furnished as a lady's boudoir, with a background of exquisite hothouse flowers, giant ferns, dwarf palms, and overhanging creepers. In the midst rose a little column of rose water, which fell back, with the murmur of a thousand drops, into a shell-shaped basin slightly raised above the tesselated floor.

"This is the prison," said Louis, "to which you are condemned!"

His fair guest stood for a moment, speechless with surprise. She then uttered a little cry of delight, and clapped her hands together with approval.

"Bravo! bravo! This is a work of genius, my good Louis. And now—what am I to do?"

"Hush! imagine yourself in your own boudoir. This is your favourite swing-chair—the one with the pale Japanese rug. Will you not sit in it? Here is my arm-chair—with the table and revolving book-case beside it."

"What a queer fellow you are, Louis! Why do you put this screen between us?"

"Excuse my eccentricities!" he said, with a smile. "We can

see one another in the mirror over there. Are you quite comfortable?"

"Of course I am," she answered; "but this is the very queerest of chairs: it seems to have eccentric motion and turns round of its own accord, now and then; it also has a habit of stopping gradually as it swings back, and then resuming its motion as if nothing had happened."

"Precisely!" observed Louis, quite calmly. "If you will watch my movements, as reflected in yonder mirror, you will find that certain actions of mine are respectively coincidental with certain experiences of yours. Look, now!"

"I am looking."

"Listen. I have here a number of unobtrusive little handles and knobs, with the aid of which I control by machinery the movements of your chair, and other things, including the screens on either side of you, which I bend to the proper angles for my purpose. Good! Do you see a chased silver box on the table beside you. It will repay examination. It is pretty, is it not?"

"Charming."

"Charming," repeated Louis. Then he continued: "On the other side of you is a beautifully printed book which my friend Mr. Hollander, the celebrated artist, has given to me. It is his autobiography, and is printed for private circulation only. The etchings and illustrations are his own. It is a most interesting book, and quite an unusual work of art. Would you like to look into it for a minute or two?"

Somewhat after this fashion Louis kept his visitor employed. Finally he rose from his chair, and announced that it was time to go to lunch.

"But you have not photographed me yet!" she protested.

"Forgive me," answered Louis. "During the last few minutes I have exposed a number of negatives, every one of which is likely to be a most successful portrait."

"What do you mean, Louis?"

"I mean just what I say. The art of taking portraits consists chiefly in catching a natural pose or characteristic expression of the sitter. I think I have done this in your case, on instantaneous plates. I seized the several opportunities when your attention was fixed, and when the expression on your face was sufficiently alive to some passing interest. These opportunities were carefully rehearsed in my mind beforehand; and having led you into my innocent pitfall, I pressed a button and the thing was done."

"You take my breath away! Do tell me—which were the respective moments at which you caught me in all my unaffected simplicity?"

"Firstly," he replied, "at the moment when your chair tipped gradually backwards and stopped; also when you were watching me

intently in the mirror, while I explained the movements of my machinery; again, when you were in the act of examining the silver box; lastly while you were reading the book. On each occasion you were differently posed, and under the influence of different interests. It will be surprising if I fail to show you to yourself as intimate friends are accustomed to see you: that is to say, at your best, instead of, as the photographer would have you, at your worst."

"And where on earth is your camera all this time?"

"In the shadow, behind the curtain, over there."

"But how did you focus me?"

"My range was calculated and found for me by electrical machinery as easily as a gun is laid and fired on an ironclad."

After luncheon—which was served in a room said to have been the refectory of a monastery which anciently occupied the site of the present house, and the remains of which still formed part of it—Louis suggested that they should spend the afternoon on the river, a proposition to which Mr. and Mrs. Randolph readily assented.

In this manner the hours passed away most agreeably. The day was fine and warm, with the gentlest of breezes; and the river afforded that fascinating pleasure peculiar to it.

After sculling a mile or two down stream they dallied about in a back-water; then made their own tea on an island; and later on they sculled back to the raft. Here they found awaiting them a very smart victoria and pair belonging to Louis, and the guests were driven to the station to catch an express train taking them homewards in time for dinner.

Saying good-bye to Louis from the carriage window when the train started, Mrs. Randolph summed up her thanks for his hospitable entertainment.

"It is all simply perfect, my dear Louis. But, if you want to bring the millionaires, that double-sculling boat must be a steam launch."

III.

One morning a week or two afterwards Louis found himself wending his way to Mrs. Randolph's house in Upper Grosvenor Street.

On his being shown into her boudoir, Mrs. Randolph received him with the most excited expressions of congratulation upon the results of her visit to Datchet, namely, four proofs of the photographs then taken. It is of no use to try and describe them here. A notion of their excellence may, however, be suggested by the conversation which took place.

"What can I say to you, Louis?" began Mrs. Randolph. "These things are above criticism. One can only stand before them and worship. They are a revelation in art, and you are the prophet."

"I will take a share of the credit," said he, "if only for the pleasure of receiving praise from you; but, to tell the truth, you were the initiator of the scheme, and I owe more than I can say to the skilled assistance and advice of Mr. Hollander, who generously undertook the whole of the artistic arrangements for me, and who has consented to work upon all my plates for me in a manner undreamt of in the ordinary photographer's shop. I am deeply indebted, moreover, to the ingenuity of the celebrated electricians, Messrs. Rawhouse and Watson, for my machinery."

"Splendid!" cried Mrs. Randolph. "This beats anything I ever heard of. But here are the goods delivered, although not paid for. Remember in future, dear Louis—cash before delivery."

"You forget," he replied, "that this was to be my present to you in return for the idea which you suggested."

"Is this really so, Louis?"

"If you will accept the gift."

"Of course I will—from you. I will revenge myself by being your live advertisement."

"It will be very kind of you."

"But—tell me, Louis, what are you going to charge your patrons and patronesses? You must not let them off too cheap. What is your figure?"

"One hundred guineas."

"One hundred guineas!" cried Mrs. Randolph.

"One hundred guineas," repeated Mansfield—"not a penny less. Everything is included in the sum, except railway fare. I will devote one day to each appointment. I will entertain the sitter and friends. I will drive them about, take them on the river in the steam launch, and do everything to amuse them for the day. They will never come in contact with the vulgar and shoppy side of the business. They will be photographed without being conscious of it, and without being bored. I will give to each of my subjects a richly and sensibly framed copy of one of the four proofs; and a dozen copies in the usual way—but *such* copies."

Mrs. Randolph gave a little sly laugh, and said: "You are perfectly right—it must not be one penny less than one hundred guineas."

From that moment forward, like the excellent little friend she was, Mrs. Randolph began to advertise Louis Mansfield. She promptly invited her friends to see his pictures of her, under the most favourable conditions, and it was not long before the idea "took on."

During the following season every beautiful woman in town whose husband could be made to disgorge the necessary sum insisted on an early appointment at the Old Manor House.

But Louis Mansfield was nothing if he was not particular. He hated the mercenary methods of ordinary business, and declined positively to entertain the requests of mere strangers. It was only

after people had been duly introduced to him in ordinary society, only after their being approved by him (so to speak), only after he had been begged and prayed to, that Louis would consent to immortalise their faces by his method.

As a result of these precautions, Mansfield turned out no work except what was acknowledged on all sides to be exquisite in every respect. Mr. Hollander, moreover, surpassed himself in the transcendent skill and taste of his finishing touches to the plates and prints.

It became the rage of the season to be "invited" by Mr. Mansfield to visit his studio, and bring a few friends. Fashionable people—to speak metaphorically—tore and rent one another in the struggle to obtain admission to the charmed circle. The aristocracy, of course, were soon to the front. Ere long royalty made its appearance upon the field. Personages of the very highest rank who were in the habit of commanding "the mountain" to come to them, now (after the prudent manner of Mahomet) condescended to come to the mountain—that is to say, to the Manor House. Rumour went on so far as to state that the Empress of this, the Queen of that, and the Princess of the other, came over to England with no other purpose or intention in the world than to be photographed by Mr. Louis Mansfield.

The flood of customers increased so rapidly, and the ideal placed before him was so high, that Louis soon found his business becoming unmanageable. Master of the most profitable photographic undertaking in the world, he had to admit himself its slave. Night and day he could get no rest, without falling short of what he considered to be his duty. Finally, he fell ill, seriously ill. The doctors forbade him to continue the occupation. He was ordered abroad for at least two years to recruit.

He could very well afford to go away. A magnificent offer had been made by a syndicate to buy up the whole of his business. In the few years during which he had been at work he had amassed a larger fortune than he knew what to do with.

Louis had but one sorrow in life. We all remember the vision in blue tulle at Lady Shottesbroke's ball. Her father was an aristocrat of the old school. He had absolutely refused, once and for all, to allow his daughter to marry a mere photographer; and it was, perhaps, to this unfortunate position of affairs that Louis attributed some of the ill-health that overtook him.

But good luck often comes in disguise. Mansfield having decided to sell his business and to go abroad for awhile, the old aristocrat signified his intention—after a certain amount of bullying from mutual friends—of consenting to his daughter's marriage with Mr. Mansfield. At last everything promised as merrily as a marriage bell.

One afternoon, the last which Louis intended to spend in the place now endeared to him by many pleasant memories, and by

association with his success in life, the successful photographer conceived a fancy to photograph himself. It would be the easiest thing in the world to do so. He wanted to give the result to somebody —somebody who would value it.

He set his machinery in motion, and arranged everything to his satisfaction. He then sat in the usual chair from which he was wont to direct his operations, and proceeded to move his handles and touch his buttons after the manner customary to him.

But, somehow or other, nothing seemed to go right. The light was bad, and was rapidly growing worse. His brain became confused with the multitude of mechanical contrivances he was so well accustomed to control at other times. Now, everything refused to work. Was he ill, he asked himself. It seemed like it.

As the confusion of his senses increased, he became seriously alarmed. A mist enveloped the beautiful conservatory, and a film fell over his eyes. A noise of voices floated in the air. He tried to speak, but could not; he struggled to rise, but fell back. At last with a superhuman effort he cried aloud, and at the sound of his voice, all the beautiful fabric built around him fell with a crash to the ground.

He awoke!

It had all been a dream.

There, before him, stood Mrs. Guppins, his landlady, who—from astonishment at finding Louis asleep in his arm-chair, dressed in the clothes in which he had come back from Lady Shottesbroke's ball, and crying out in his sleep—had dropped to the floor the tray containing his breakfast, and had broken every scrap of the china accordingly.

It was a rude shock to poor Louis, whose dream had been very vivid, and whose disappointment at its unreality was very great indeed.

But the experience lent him wisdom. He took deeply to heart the lessons conveyed to him in his sleep, and determined to strike out a new line for himself.

A year afterwards, we find him no longer in the City. He is now appointed photographer to one of the most important scientific institutions; and enjoys an income, arising from that and other sources, which places him in very comfortable circumstances.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Mr. Randolph to his wife a few days ago; "Louis is in luck at last."

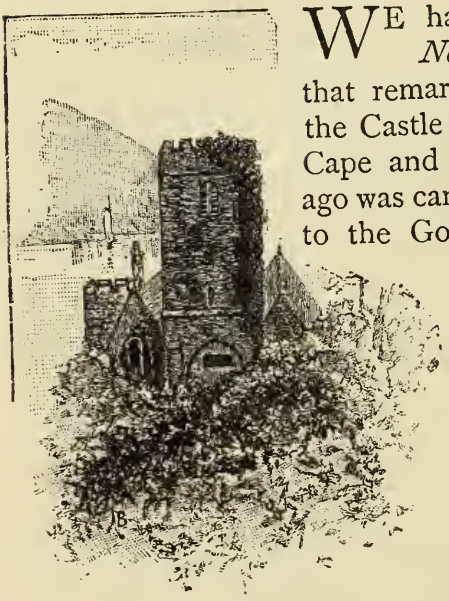
"What has happened?" inquired his charming wife.

"'A marriage has been arranged,'" read Mr. Randolph from the *Morning Post*, "'between Mr. Louis Mansfield, nephew of Lord Shottesbroke, and ——'"

"The lady in blue tulle," said Mrs. Randolph, with a smile.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "The Bretons at Home," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.



St. Petrox.

WE had gone down Channel in the S.S. *Norham Castle*, the latest addition to that remarkable series of vessels belonging to the Castle Packets Line; the line trading to the Cape and the Cape only; and a year or two ago was carrying thousands of hopeful emigrants to the Gold Fields of South Africa. Alas! those gold-fields for some time past have been under a cloud; shares once at a premium are now at a discount; but, for the peace of mind of those who have ventured and lost, it has been positively stated that better days will come, and that ere long South Africa will rise again gloriously, like a phœnix from its ashes, upon a surer and more solid, because a less speculative basis, than ever.

Of the *Norham Castle*, Captain J. C. Robinson was commander; right worthy chief of so grand a craft; a tall, fair Saxon, tracing his descent from Harald, last of the Saxon Chiefs, or nearly so: a favourite with all on board and simply bowed down to by the ladies: a worship he returned with compound interest.

Every modern improvement, every luxury that fancy could conceive the *Norham Castle* possessed. It was a delight and privilege only to take a voyage in her. She was so huge that she breasted the waves, and only the roughest sea could affect the steadiness of her gallant career. At night the saloons were brilliant with electric light, by day they were full of sunshine. Consequently everyone on board was amiable and philanthropic; a normal condition of things on every vessel that owns Captain Robinson as monarch.

For ourselves we were outsiders, in so far as that at Dartmouth we should leave the good ship to go on her successful course, and return to London by train.

"Ourselves" consisted of the writer and H. Minor; that same Charterhouse boy who had gone up the Wey with us the day we had visited the empty house, encountered the ghost, and left Mrs. Muggins upon the embankment wringing her hands and executing

a war dance of despair at the non-delivery of the order.* H. Minor having a holiday at that moment, had pleaded that he might accompany us, delicately wrapping up a small amount of flattery in silver paper by assuring us that for the pleasure of our society he was ready to brave all the perils of the deep, all the horrors of sea-sickness.

Who can resist flattery? Not the weak-minded writer. Consequently H. Minor gained the day and came up to London from the "Hursts" of Kent—that strangely beautiful neighbourhood—where he was rapidly thinning the unripe apple trees in the orchards, and driving the gardeners insane by periodical visits to the hot-houses and treating himself to the finest bunches of muscats of Alexandria: fruit that the men had looked upon as pictures more beautiful than Turner's, more precious than rubies. "Sir, it comes to this," Sampson, the head gardener, had said to H. Minor's indulgent parent, after one of these depredations: "flesh and blood can stand it no longer. Either Mr. H. must go or I must go. To see my children lopped off one by one in this way, and sometimes two by two—no, sir, flesh and blood couldn't stand it. Either Mr. H. goes or I go."

The result of which was that H. Minor came up to town with the following bulletin in his pocket. "The lad's beyond me. Glad to get rid of him. Keep him as long as you like."

So H. Minor went down Channel and Sampson kept the place he never had the slightest intention of resigning. Later on I was told that he went up to his master and, touching his hat, delivered himself of the following:

"I hope, sir, as we shall see something more of Mr. H. before the end of the holidays. The place ain't itself, like, when he's away."

"But what about the muscats, Sampson?" asked the pater; "I can't do without my grapes."

"Well, sir, I've had fresh patent locks put on the doors—Chubb's. They're pretty safe."

"But you know what Mr. H. is," remonstrated Mr. H.'s weak parent: "he'd climb up the outside like a cat, and get in through the windows."

"Well, sir—I'll risk it. The place ain't itself at all, like. It's bad enough for me to see my children lopped off by ones and twos, but it's worse for you to be deprived of yours."

Of course this was only Sampson's way of looking at the matter.

We started from Blackwall, that picturesque part of the river, where all is life and movement, yet marked by a certain stately repose. The saddest part of all the river, perhaps, for here hundreds and thousands of relatives who were all in all to each other have parted never to meet again. Husband, brother, son, sweetheart, each and all have sailed to some far-off land in the hope of making the "fortune" so few ever realise. Blackwall has seen more bitter tears shed, more aching hearts beating, than perhaps any other spot in the wide, wide

* "The Ghost of Clare Manor."—ARGOSY, Dec., 1890.

world. To us it is surrounded by a sacred halo of sadness and melancholy, and we never visit the familiar scene without seeing in imagination a crowd of "pallid sorrowful faces," an army of ghosts: the ghosts of disappointed hopes; of those who sailed away to "the land of the Great Mogul," for ever and for ever.

To-day, however, all was warmth and sunshine. There, across the locks, was the *Norham Castle* getting up steam, preparing to loose her moorings; her grey sides fresh as paint could make them. She looked a monstrous and a noble craft indeed. And on the bridge a certain Saxon face espied us and signalled that we were only just in time.

"That pickle again!" cried Captain Robinson aghast, as we joined him on the bridge. "Do you mean to say that he accompanies you? Young sir," turning to H. Minor with tones trembling and sepulchral, "if you attempt to climb the funnel, or stop the engines, or put out the electric lights, or splice the main brace, I'll throw you overboard."

"Will you! I'm not a bit afraid of you," said H. Minor, impudently. "As long as my protector's here, he'll take jolly good care no harm happens to me. Don't you think, Captain Robinson, you might take a holiday for once and give me command of the vessel going down Channel?"

Before long we were steaming down the river—that classic stream of these unclassic days; as much to London as the Tiber was to ancient Rome: between those everlasting banks, which are so full of energy, so suggestive of power; teeming with works and factories, crowded with life, echoing with the sound of hammer and anvil. Slowly and majestically we made way. One familiar spot after another was passed. The river widened; factories and noise and life fell away; the land became mere reaches and sandbanks; and then the mouth, and the open sea, and the fresh pure air, and a glorious sunset flushing the wide waste and promising a goodly morrow. And presently night, and the rolling stars flashing and scintillating in the summer sky; and a full-orbed moon casting a lovely silvery shimmer upon the water. Seven bells struck—half an hour of midnight—as H. Minor coiled himself round in the top berth of our deck cabin, which he declared was almost too short for him.

"A calm and prosperous voyage, like Mendelssohn's Symphony," he laughed. "No perils; no sea-sickness; and best of all I am with you. Old Sampson may keep his grapes, and the pater——"

But I will spare the latter's feelings. I grasped his hand and wished him pleasant dreams, and God-speed, now and ever—for he was a goodly and promising youth, if he would be true to himself as the years went on; and turning out the light, I went back to the bridge for another hour's chat and pacing with the Captain; listening to his observations on life in general and South Africa in particular; the fund of funny anecdotes he had stored of the curious specimens

of humanity with whom he had come into contact in his frequent voyages.

The next day rose fair and cloudless; and still, as H. Minor said, "no perils, no sea-sickness, no drawbacks to test his devotion." The coast was full of interest, as we passed one familiar point after another; white cliffs and red cliffs, towns and villages, bays and points; lighthouses looking white and pure and cool, where life always seems to us an ideal existence, full of the charm of stillness

STOKE GABRIEL.

and repose. Above all, there was the lovely shimmering sea around us, reflecting all the blue of the sky, as smooth as a painted ocean. And night fell again, and on the morning of the Wednesday we were steaming down the lovely Devonshire coast, with its magnificent rocks and all its wealth of verdure. The harbour of Dartmouth opened up with a surprise. We steered in majestically between the headlands, and as eight bells announced midday we dropped anchor.

They who have not seen Dartmouth can scarcely realise its beauty. It is the most romantic harbour in England; perhaps one

of the most romantic in the world. Approaching from the sea, at the extreme point of the headland forming the entrance, above a rock of slate, rises Dartmouth Castle. It is composed of a square and a round tower, the latter dating from the reign of Henry VII. Near the castle are a modern battery, the ruins of an ancient manor-house, and the church of Saint Petrox. A high hill rises behind all this, well wooded and full of romantic paths and shady recesses provided by kindly Nature; nooks that no doubt have listened to many a love vow, impassioned at the moment, broken in the keeping, and perhaps earned for it in days gone by—the stirring days of Fairfax—the name of the Gallant's Bower.

Passing beyond all this the harbour widens, and Dartmouth rises on the left, Kingswear on the right. The latter is said to be the older of the two: but from the harbour all that is antiquated keeps itself out of sight. All down the shore on the right, the houses, new and imposing, rise upon the high cliffs; detached houses surrounded by gardens and overshadowing trees, a wealth of verdure, a gorgeous profusion of flowers. It is a dream of beauty, and like all dreams of beauty it is difficult to realise and absorb; whilst it creates a certain profound melancholy in you who gaze upon it. Life seems infinitely too short for all this loveliness; one's everyday existence too commonplace.

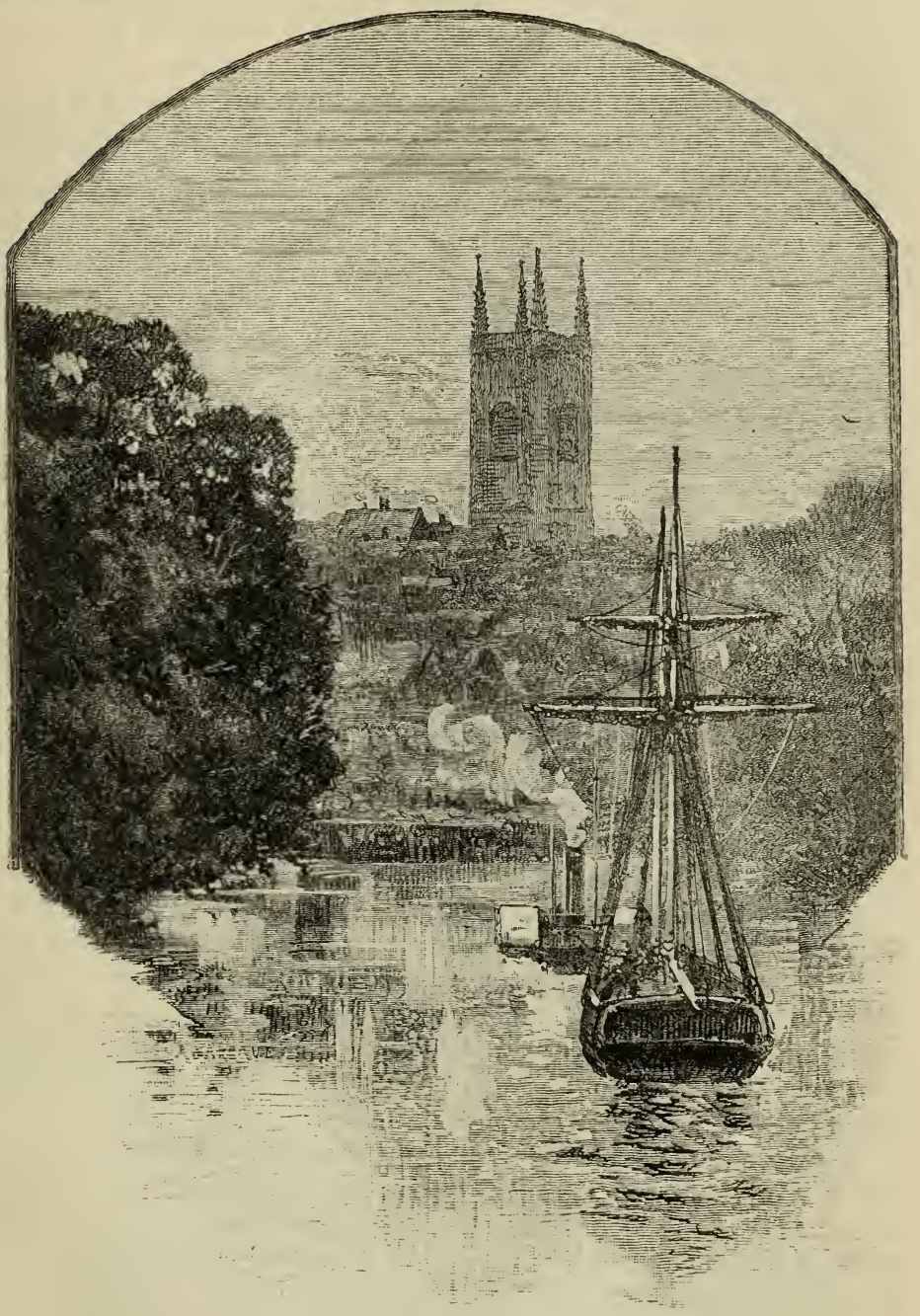
Dartmouth, on the opposite side, is much more town-like. It is an accumulation of houses, grouped together apparently as closely as herrings in a barrel. It looks, and is, extremely old. The houses rise in terraces; and here, too, in smaller gardens, is a wealth of blossom. Flowers in profusion decorate many a window, and many a house is made beautiful with trailing creepers.

From Dartmouth the harbour looks landlocked. The Channel leading to the sea is called the Jaw Bones; and here, in days gone by, from the towers guarding the entrance on each headland, stretched the chain that secured the harbour at night, or whenever it was necessary to deny access from the sea. Most ancient harbours were protected in the same way.

Amidst the clustering houses rises the old church of Saint Saviour's, looking grey, solemn and dignified, as church should look. It dates back to the thirteenth century, but was partly rebuilt in the fourteenth in the form of arcades. A stiff climb takes you to it; ancient grave-stones closely encompass it, and the surrounding houses lie so near to it that an acrobat living in one of them could easily take a flying leap from his room and alight in the pulpit. There is a close, unhealthy air about the place; it is very much shut in, for the cliffs rise high behind it, and the pure winds of Heaven can only reach it from the harbour.

The interior is gloomy but interesting, possessing some fine old brasses and monuments, and a curious and ancient rood screen picked out in many colours. The stone pulpit is also very curious,

quaintly carved, and, like the screen, painted and gilded. The galleries and panelling of the church are painted and gilded in like manner.



TOTNES.

Dartmouth is famous for its old houses, though the few that remain are being rapidly modernised. Like everything else, it is making so-called progress. We remember, some years ago, the old post-office ; a very primitive arrangement in a delightful old house. A delightful old official, who looked as if he ought to have worn

frills and a pigtail, handed you your letters. On going up to it again last year, the old place had been pulled down, and newness and grandeur and ugliness had succeeded to what had once been picturesque and charming and artistic. But what will you, in this utilitarian age? We inquired of a friendly policeman; who looked bored to death, as if in this sleepy old town his office was a sinecure and for him Time dragged with leaden heels; what had become of the institution.

"It is on the quay, now, sir; a grand new building," he replied, with a dialect and a confusion of genders we will not attempt to imitate.

"And the old official who handed us our letters?" we asked.

"Ah, sir," with a sad shake of the head, "he will hand you no more."

We found the new building fully answering the description. A polite youth gave us our letters, and exactly matched the new building. A new order reigned, the old order had passed away. Probably the old official had died of a broken heart.

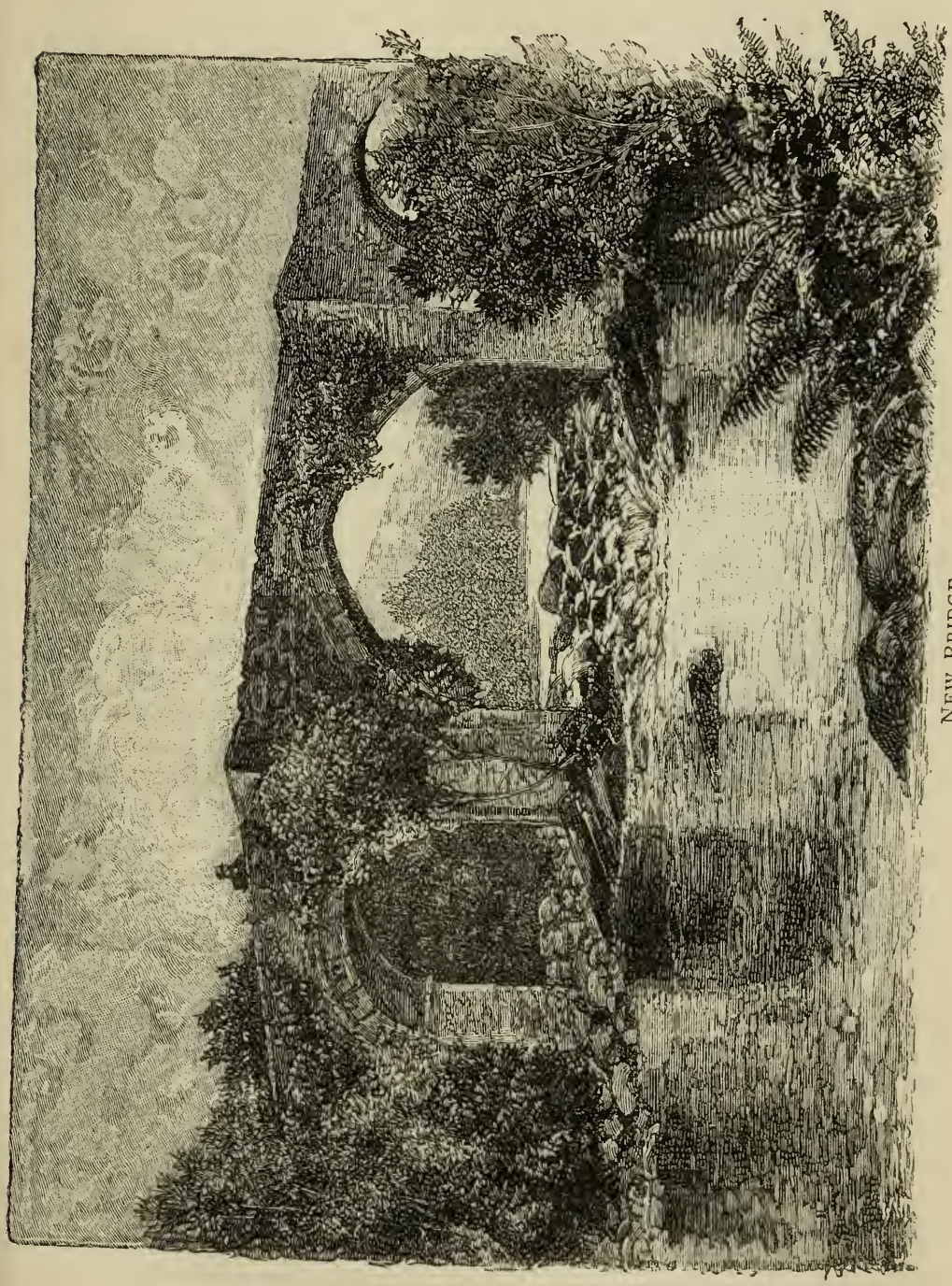
The names of some of the streets still remain in some instances: Butter Row, Fosse Street, the Shambles. These are delightfully refreshing, and take us back long years. What new thoroughfare would be called the Shambles? And if so called, what an incongruity would there be between the name and the erections: as uncomfortable and inappropriate as the square man in the round hole.

But in Dartmouth, the oldest remaining houses are found in these quaintly-named thoroughfares: and when you come upon tenements whose fronts bear the date 1625, 1640, you are not at all surprised. You feel that, for once, things are as they should be. There is no denying that the houses are picturesque; but after all, they make little impression upon you, if you have revelled in any of those Mediæval towns abroad, where not a few houses here and there arrest the attention, but a whole series; row after row and street after street of gabled outlines and latticed windows and rich carvings that charm the eye and captivate the fancy.

In Dartmouth, if you have any taste, the house that will bear most charm for you is one in the Shambles, or Higher Street, as it is now sometimes profanely called. It is small, old-fashioned and unpretending, but its window displays the purest of dairy produce, in the form of butter, eggs, and rich Devonshire cream. And a prominent card, bearing the magic word JUNKET, makes your heart beat more quickly. We entered this very shop some years ago, two of us, determined upon a feast for once both of quantity and quality.

"Eh, sir," said the interesting old man who served; "but there's been a run this morning upon my junket, I don't know why. I've only enough left for one of you two gentlemen. Which is it to be?"

It was a delicate matter; we drew lots and the lot fell upon the writer, and never was junket more appreciated. Last year the old man was still there, and we went in, quite a party of us. He had a



NEW BRIDGE.

supply for a regiment—it was not half so good. But it is always so; we value most what we possess in least abundance.

The streets of Dartmouth are steep, tortuous and uneven. The town is irregularly built, and the less said about the pavement the

better. It all adds to the air of antiquity, the picturesqueness of the place. You feel very much as if you were abroad; are reminded of those towns that are built on mountain-sides or the borders of lakes. The language spoken around you is very unlike English; there are words and expressions without number that you cannot understand, amounting in Cornwall almost to a distinct tongue, like the Breton of Brittany, to which it is closely allied in many ways. As for the genders, they are hopelessly mixed. It has been said that everything in Devonshire and Cornwall is masculine excepting a tom cat, which is invariably spoken of as she.

One of the things that most attract attention in Dartmouth Harbour is the small floating town of the *Britannia*, where the Royal Naval Cadets spend their first two years of training and discipline after successfully passing the Competitive Examination, for which a nomination is first necessary. It is to be hoped that this system of nomination will never be done away with, thus throwing open the Navy to mere competition only, as has been done in the Army. In the latter case it has scarcely raised the tone of the Service, but in the Navy it would for many reasons be unadvisable. Naval officers are much more dependent upon each other that those of the Army, and it is therefore of greater importance that the social standing of the Navy should not be lowered.

Here, on the *Britannia*, the cadets pass their first two years of naval discipline; and many have looked back upon this time as laying the foundation of future greatness. It is a happy epoch with most of them. Sometimes they pass out as midshipmen, but not by any means always. It is a great thing for them when they do so. There is excellent discipline on board; and everything is done to promote their physical well-being in the way of healthy sport and recreation; much time being devoted to gymnastics, boat-pulling in their blue gigs, following the beagles, a pack of which is kept up for them as a healthy resort during the winter months.

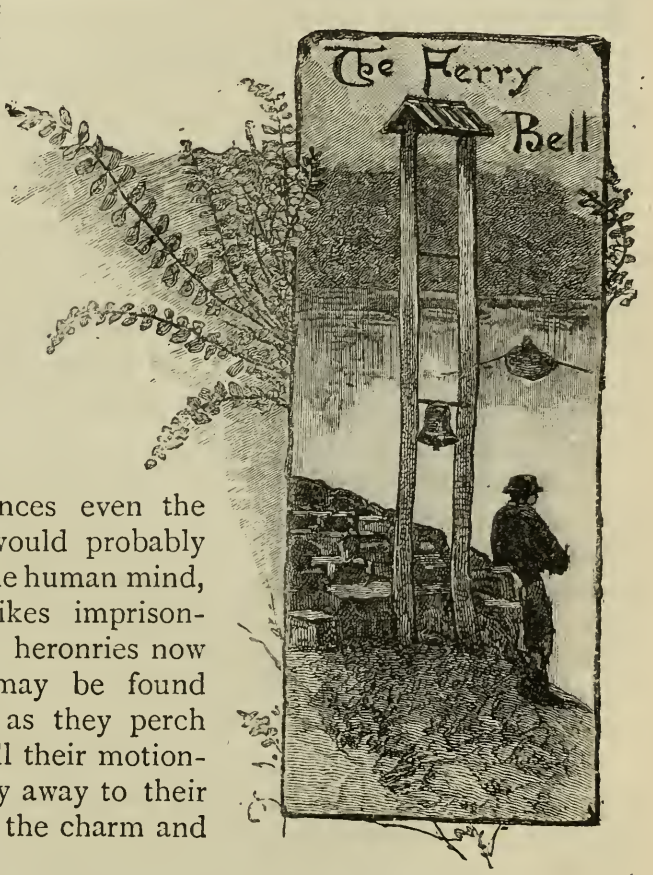
All this does its work, and helps to make our naval officers what they are: a set of men who will not easily be equalled in gentlemanly tone, in feeling and conduct, or in loyalty to their sovereign. There is amongst them an Esprit de Corps, a spirit of Noblesse oblige, that in times of danger and temptation is one of the best safeguards anyone can possess.

But to our subject.

However great the beauties of Dartmouth, the charms of the Dart itself exceed them. The river is navigable as far as Totnes, and is beautiful from beginning to end. There are three specially lovely rivers in this neighbourhood: the Dart, the Fowey and the Fal, the latter running up from Falmouth to Truro. The Fal and the Dart resemble each other in their amazing luxuriance of verdure. The banks slope upwards, and are thickly and splendidly wooded. A rich carpet of leaves is spread before you, and the eye is enchanted.

The Fal has so many creeks and inlets that it is said a whole fleet could anchor in the stream and no two vessels would be visible to each other.

This description will equally apply to the Dart. If it has fewer creeks and inlets than the Fal, it is more winding in its course: so winding, that as you progress upwards the water constantly looks landlocked, and you have the impression of passing through a succession of lakes. From Sharpham, lying amongst the hills, which close in very much, you look down upon the river, here so winding that it is said you see it from fifteen different points of view, each point looking like a separate lake, surrounded by its slopes and wooded banks.



AT THE FERRY.

At low water the river is not navigable, and you may easily find yourself stranded if you are inexperienced. A very lovely spot for enforced idleness; but under such circumstances even the beauties of the Dart would probably not be appreciated. The human mind, like the starling, dislikes imprisonment. One of the few heronries now existing in England may be found here; and the birds, as they perch upon the stones, with all their motionless grave dignity, or fly away to their covers, add no little to the charm and life of the scene.

The banks are rather deserted, but are all the more attractive for being almost entirely given up to the beauties of nature. Occasionally a house stands out so well that one envies the possessor. Wonderful echoes here and there seem to awaken the spirit of the wood, but you seek it in vain; echo only answers.

Presently you come to the village of Stoke Gabriel: a few unpretending houses with picturesque thatched roofs on the banks of the river, backed by long stretches of magnificent woods. Here in the reign of Elizabeth, John Davis, the navigator, was born, discoverer of Davis's Straits. A little higher up, where the river narrows, you come to Dittisham, and its plantations of plum trees, that in spring put forth a wealth of blossom, so often transferred to canvas, and

hung on the walls of Burlington House. Yet higher, at low water, a rock becomes visible, on which Sir Walter Raleigh is said to have smoked his first English pipe. What has he not to answer for, for bringing home to us the fragrant weed!

Again the river winds, and presently the tall tower of Totnes Church comes suddenly into view, and your journey by steamer is over. Beyond this the Dart is not navigable, but you may follow its windings right up to Dartmoor, where it has its rise, and you will come upon many a scene to astonish and delight you; scenes now of extreme sylvan beauty, now wild and severe. Spots where the trees overhang the narrow stream and darken its waters, and you look up into gloomy depths of forest almost impenetrable as night. Hills, again, that are high and barren, and often cloud-capped. Stretches of moorland from which the peat is often taken that gives fuel to the Devon cottager. You may wander away from the river and lose yourself on the moors, and marvel that anything so wild and desolate can still exist in our small island. Perhaps no living being will cross your path, excepting, it may be, a gaoler from Dartmoor prison, looking out for an escaped prisoner. He scans you narrowly, and thinks that you bear a slight family resemblance to the missing culprit. For there are people whose diseased imaginations will persuade them into anything.

It is an enormous tract of land, this Dartmoor, spreading over a hundred and thirty thousand acres. Once upon a time it was almost inaccessible; and even now you may wander off the high road in one of the mists that come down so suddenly, lose yourself, fall into a morass, and be heard of nevermore. Several rivers here take their rise, and some fifty smaller streams. After a period of wet weather they roar with the sound of a torrent, and when a high wind sweeps down over the tors, the scene is wild, savage and sublime.

The moors are billowy and undulating throughout. The tors rise in all directions, some to the height of two thousand feet. They are weird and magnificent, their rock-crowned summits reaching to the clouds, and looking like ruined castles that date back to a chivalrous and romantic age. You may well imagine them the haunts and habitations of the pixies, who are supposed to come down to the moors in the heavy mists and lure luckless travellers to their doom. If you have lost your way you pause for a moment, wondering which direction to take; you shout for help, if haply someone familiar with the spot may be at hand. Not even an echo answers you. Nothing breaks the deathlike silence. Nothing, excepting the cry of some wild birds over your head, making, perhaps, for a distant tor; for they have an instinct to guide them through the mist which you have not. Their cry startles you; it sounds wild and unearthly; the Cornish legend of the Seven Whistlers flashes across you, and you wonder if these "shrieking harbingers" are proclaiming your doom. It is a doom that has fallen upon many. And the clouds

BUCKLAND BEACON.

gather so quickly, and the mists fall so suddenly, that it is dangerous to frequent the moors without a guide or at least a compass.

Thus it happens that fine weather on Dartmoor is rather the exception. Either a thick mist is rolling over hill and valley, cold and cruel and creepy; or the tors on the hill summits are cloud-capped; or—not least frequently—rain is falling. It rains, indeed, so often, that the following weather rhyme is a proverb or prophecy of the neighbourhood:—

> The South wind blows, and brings wet weather;
> The North gives wet and cold together;
> The West wind comes brimful of rain,
> The East wind drives it back again.
> Then if the sun in red should set,
> We know the morrow must be wet;
> And if the eve is clad in grey,
> The next is sure a rainy day.

So according to this rhyme, Dartmoor weather resembles certain cross and contrary people whom you are for ever in vain endeavouring to please: whatever you do is sure to be wrong.

Dartmoor dates back to times long past. The ancient Britons wandered over the tors, and here made themselves a local habitation and a name. These tors must have looked then very much as they look now, for they belong to the few things of earth that change not. The Royal Forest, now confined to the parish of Lidford, was "King's land" before the Conquest. The forest itself may have been founded by William Rufus, who also founded the New Forest in Hampshire. His favourite sport, we know, was chasing the red deer; and, until the seventeenth century, red deer abounded in Dartmoor forest. It also became the home of wolves and wild cats; and on cold winter nights the forest glades and the long stretches of woodland must have echoed with sounds far more terrific and blood-curdling than the fateful cry of the Seven Whistlers.

But even to-day, without visiting the moors, it is impossible to realise their gloomy extent, their wild grandeur; the singular beauty of their tone and colouring. Many an artist has tried to reproduce this tone and given it up in despair, for it needs the inspiration of genius. In sunny weather, the hills and the tors look ethereal and unreal, as if they belonged to spirit land, not to earth. The moors themselves are very barren, and the soil is almost all granite. The whortleberry flourishes, for it is hardy enough to flourish anywhere; and reeds and rushes grow near the rivers and whisper their love songs to them; moss and heather abound. That is about all.

Following the course of the Dart from Totnes, you will find many a spot in which a good day's sport may be had. The trout are small, but very sweet in flavour. It is something, also, to pass one's days amidst so much natural beauty. There are bends and nooks so lovely that sometimes you will forget to whip the stream, lost in

rapturous contemplation; just as an orchestra has been known to forget to play when some prima-donna, one of the few great singers of the world, has suddenly reached a point of excellence hitherto unknown, and lifted them out of themselves.

It is a lovely spot in which to pass a holiday, this course of the Dart, this neighbourhood of the moor. And there are so many resting places that it is also an easy matter. Small inns, quiet and primitive, perfect Edens, where roses and other creepers climb up the walls, look laughingly in at the window and make fragrant your room, giving you freely and generously of their best, asking for nothing in return.

There is New Bridge, for instance, though the bridge itself looks old and romantic enough for anything, with its moss-grown, lichen-stained arches. Here the Dart winds gracefully under dense woods, and many a tree bends and kisses its reflection in the water. Beyond these woods rises Buckland Beacon: one of the weather prophets of the surrounding country. When it has not its nightcap on, you may safely prophesy a fair day. It is a great stretch of hill and country, the upper portion of it wild and naked, but extremely beautiful. Indeed, no matter where you go in this neighbourhood, you cannot get away from this beauty of nature. The wildest, most rugged spots have their exceeding charm.

Leaving New Bridge and crossing Hembury Hill past Gallantry Bower—one thinks of the days of good Queen Bess and cakes and ale—you come through grand views of the winding Dart and of Buckland Beacon to Buckfastleigh, a small town of some three thousand inhabitants, overlooked by its church, crowning the summit of a hill. A Jacob's ladder of one hundred and forty steps alone leads to it, so that the old, the feeble, and the unwilling have good excuse for remaining at home. The tower and chancel are Early English, the nave is Perpendicular. The tower is crowned by one of the few spires to be seen in Devonshire. The Devil is said to have done his best to prevent the building of the church, by removing by night the stones that had been placed by the workmen during the day, and the mark of his finger and thumb is pointed out on a farmhouse in the neighbourhood. But what church on a hill is without these legends, in which the Devil always plays the part of obstructionist?

The views from the church are widespread. Far down winds the picturesque Dart, and here and there a fisherman patiently whipping the stream makes a very interesting illustration of Dr. Johnson's definition; only that here the worm is represented by a fly, and it is by no means the mark of a fool to be able to throw that fly skilfully. On the one side you have this valley of the Dart, wherein are the remains of the ancient Abbey of Buckfast, and on the other side the long, sweeping valley where the small town or village reposes. Pure, indeed, may be the air of some of these secluded settlements, but

enervating and relaxing. Everything has its counterfoil—le chat dans le coin.

That same Abbey of Buckfast dates to a far-gone period. It was a monastery for Benedictine monks before the Conquest; and grand old times the monks must have had in that lovely spot, spending their days agreeably in fishing, with perhaps a little fasting and penance by the way. Later, the monastery was sacked by the Northmen, and the possessions bestowed upon it by Canute are recorded in Domesday Book. In the twelfth century it fell into the hands of the Cistercian monks, and became extremely rich and flourishing. William Slade, famous at Oxford for his lectures on Aristotle, was once its learned abbot; and Gabriel Donne, a monk of Stratford-le-Bow, brought its reign to a close.

And now history repeats itself, for in 1882 some Benedictine monks, who were expelled from France at the general ecclesiastical exodus, purchased the site, have built up a new and flourishing monastery, and very comfortably established themselves in the exquisite valley. Who shall dare predict what may be going on in England a century hence, and how far may have been substituted for the faith of the Reformation, priesthood, the confession and idolatry?

On the road from Totnes to Buckfastleigh few spots are more striking than the exquisite view from Staverton Bridge, after passing Dartington, with Austin's Bridge beyond, and the church of Buckfastleigh rising in the distance, sharply outlined against the clear sky. The celebrated Cadaford Lane is near here, and above it Cadover Hill, where Turner sat to paint his picture of Buckfast Abbey. It is one of the most glorious views in the neighbourhood, the hills closing in on every side, the slopes one succession of fruitful orchards, the river running its winding and frothy course, overshadowed by the dense woods of Holne Chase and Buckland, the abode of ferns and wild flowers. A scene and a spot on which William Browne, the Devonshire poet, wrote the following panegyric:

> Not all the ointments brought from Delos' Isle,
> Nor from the confines of seven-headed hill,
> Nor that brought whence Phœnicians have abodes,
> Nor Cyprus' wild vine flowers, nor that of Rhodes,
> Nor roses' oil from Naples, Caprea,
> Saffron confected in Cecilia;
> Nor that of quinces, nor of marjoram,
> That over from the Isle of Coös came;
> Nor these, nor any else, though ne'er so rare,
> Could with this place for sweetest smells compare.

All the apple orchards round about here make Staverton a dream of beauty in the spring-time, dazzling, ethereal, exquisite; before which we hold our breath and close our eyes. It makes the place, too, very famous for its cider, which the natives esteem above

STAVERTON.

wine. Everyone to his taste. The village lies on the right of the river, and, alas, the railway follows the left bank; so that at intervals, if you are fishing in the stream, your repose is disturbed by the iron monster of civilization; and leafy nooks and dark and cool recesses echo and re-echo the shrill whistle the driver is almost sure to give, with a long drawn-out note, in wanton mischief. It was a far lovelier spot before the railway came and destroyed much of the bank. Here the river is full flowing, and especially good for fishing.

But a very striking picture is the approach to Totnes itself from Dartmouth, which we have rather passed over. You have been steaming upwards, charmed by this beauty and wealth of verdure on either side; the trees spreading out a carpet of green leaves so straight and even that you can scarcely believe it the mere result of nature. A solitary heron has looked at you, motionless, indifferent, until you are close upon it; and then, as you prepare the salt for its tail, it has suddenly taken its majestic flight, and you see it no more. You have passed Dittisham, with its charming thatched cottages and its plum orchards; and Stoke Gabriel, with more thatched cottages, and its old church crowning the hill. And here you have noticed salmon nets hanging up to dry, nets that are always so picturesque, and now are so seldom seen in these regions. You have followed the windings of the river, until suddenly a last bend is passed and the tall and imposing tower of Totnes Church looms out above a bower of leaves, a wealth of waving trees. Behind it, in the distance, rise the hills of the moors, veiled in a lovely and romantic blue mist.

Beneath the church lies the town. Nowhere does anything very new or modern or aggressive startle you. The landing-stage is primitive, and you set foot upon earth in the midst of green trees and emerald pastures; and, in wet weather, even have to pick your way out of a very muddy lane. In the town itself, you find many traces of antiquity and an extinct greatness. It lies upon a steep hill; and, as you climb the High Street, you may still see some ancient houses with quaint gables, and one or two with piazzas, or arches. From the tower of the church the magnificent view commands a wide stretch of Dartmoor, its undulating hills and distant tors rising upwards like ruined crags and castles, whilst the stream, in a long, winding course, flashes like a silver thread through the landscape.

The town is situated on an old Roman road that led from Exeter to the Tamar. Here Brutus of Troy is said to have landed; and the stone on which tradition declares he first set foot was formerly used by the mayors of Totnes in reading aloud their proclamations to the intelligent natives. Here, also, possibly, the Trojans and Phœnicians traded in tin. The East gate still divides Fore Street from the High Street, and is worth a visit for the ancient wood carving to be found within. Totnes is quite as ancient as Dartmouth; but the one has lost all its prosperity, whilst the other, from its position, is

now rising to a place of some small importance. There is a sad and melancholy air about Totnes. Its streets are deserted. It is full of a melancholy repose—a repose very much like that of the dead cities of Holland: not the rest earned by labour, but the stagnation of decay.

Still, there is a quiet charm about Totnes. Its old houses stand out far better than those of Dartmouth. Its peace and repose, after all, are grateful, as a change from the noise and bustle of the world. The situation of the town is unusually beautiful. It gives access to a multitude of spots lovely beyond conception; a hidden world to the greater portion of mankind; a paradise whose gates are for ever wide, though so comparatively few enter in. From here you may ascend the valley of the Dart and revel in all its wonders. Or you may roam over the wide moors, drink in the lovely air, the scent of the heather, listen to the rushing waters, and lose yourself in dreams of a far-off time when the ancient Britons were masters of the situation; when wolves and the wild cat made night hideous; and the red deer bounded gracefully across the narrow ravines, or sheltered beneath the forest trees, or raced in droves over the breezy heather. A wild, free life; and it is strange what a sense of wild freedom and exhilaration will steal over you as you look round upon this twenty miles of moorland, and carry your gaze upwards to the tor-crowned hills, or down again into the precipitous ravines:

> Where echo unto echo calls,
> And all the answering waterfalls
> Make music in the air.

Enough. Let us for a moment, ere closing, recall an incident of last year, with which this neighbourhood will for evermore be associated in the heart and mind of the writer. The reader will kindly take flight across hills and moors, over fields and forests, winding rivers and an arm of the sea, and land at Torquay.

We had gone down in company with our old friend Broadley—whom some readers will remember in connection with the Cruise of the Reserve Squadron*—and with H. Minor's younger brother, who was on his way to the *Britannia*. It was the fairest of fair weather. Torquay looked, as it ever does, very lovely and attractive. The sea was calm and beautiful; blue as sapphire. The gardens of the Imperial Hotel ran down to the cliffs. The Imperial, where, by the way, they gave us the best table d'hôte dinner we had ever had in any English hotel, without exception. The cliffs led to the shore up which rolled the lovely sapphire sea. In the bay were the ships of war comprising the Offensive Squadron under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour, which had only arrived at daylight that morning. The vessels looked a noble sight by day, as they reposed in the calm waters of the bay; and at night were distinctly outlined by their brilliant electric lights. Torquay, wishing to honour them, was getting up a subscription for a ball, not knowing that the

* The Argosy, January to December 1883.

Fleet would have departed before the ball could take place. That very night of our arrival, the hotel was magnificently illuminated, as were many other buildings in the town.

Amongst the Fleet was the ill-fated *Serpent;* little dreaming then of the terrible fate in store for her. Commanding her was our old friend Captain Ross, one of the merriest, most genial, most delightful of living men. We had seen much of him that year, for he had been going through a course of study at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, together with Broadley. We had made our bow together at the Court of St. James's, and had spent many a pleasant evening at Greenwich.

We met again at Torquay, after he was appointed to the *Serpent.* Broadley had signalled to him our arrival, and after dinner, in answer to the signal, Captain Ross came in. We were then sitting upon the terrace, watching the illuminating of the hotel, or looking out seawards, upon the water and the vessels of the Squadron now lighting up; talking of a past cruise; the wonders of the *Alhambra;* the dangers of lemon-tea at Tangiers, and the many hours spent with our witty and charming companion, Mr. Edward Jago.

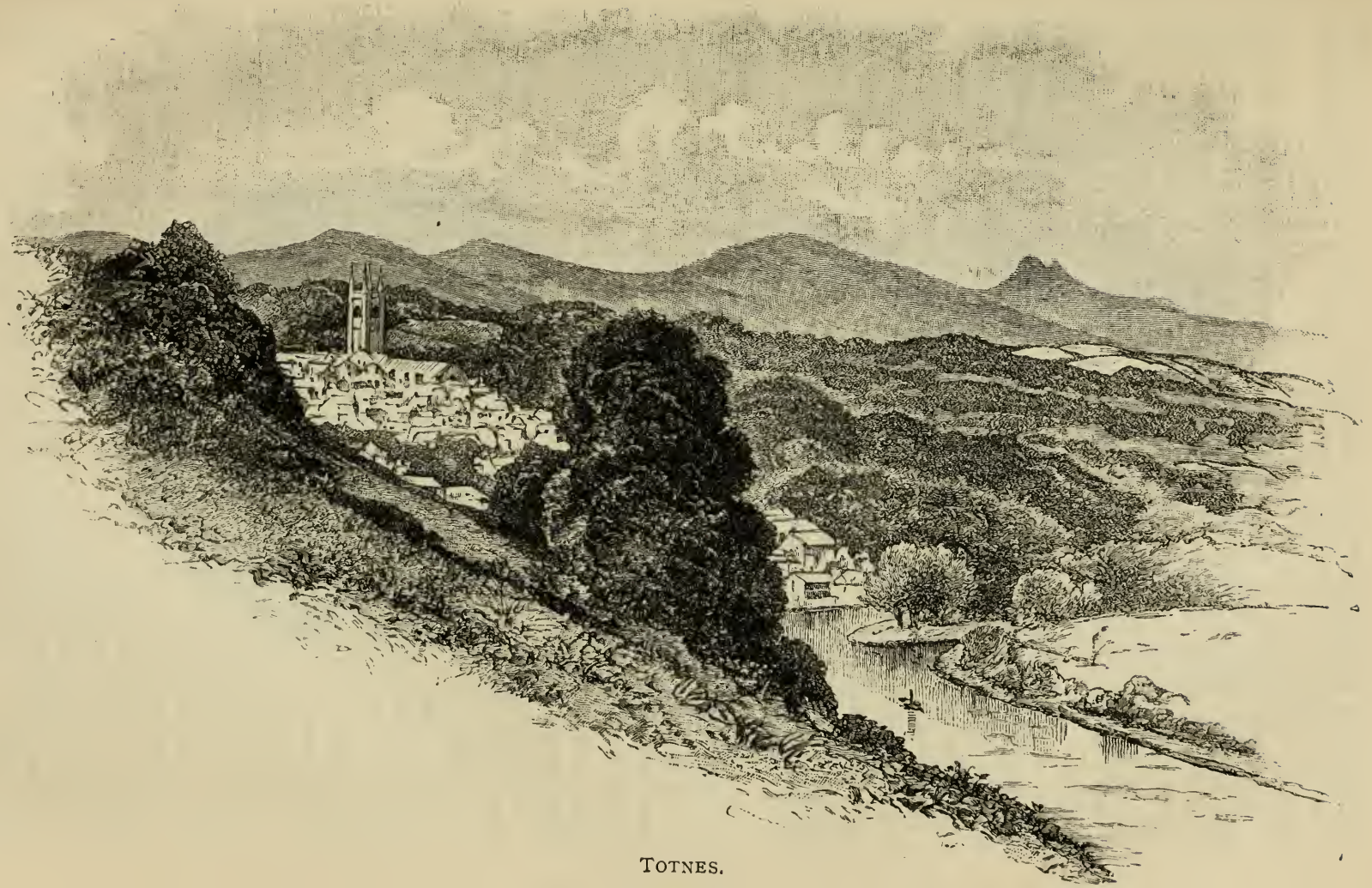
It was a glorious night. Captain Ross was in all that fund and flow of spirits which never failed him: which stood him in good stead, we must hope, in that last and terrible hour. He was happy in his command. Nothing would do but we must go back with him there and then and inspect the *Serpent*, and grow familiar with his own special quarters.

His boat was waiting, and we went. The night row upon the waters was delicious. As we gradually approached the *Serpent*, she loomed out black and gigantic, like some monstrous thing of life. We went over her, and thoroughly entered into every detail. She seemed the perfection of everything. Captain Ross was very proud of her, and his own special quarters were excellent and roomy. "The officers are admirable," he declared. "I like them all."

Then he laughingly said something about my taking a cruise with him; and we referred to that former cruise of the Reserve Squadron, which had been a time of such keen delight, but in which he had not taken part. He introduced us to such of the officers as were on board, and presently it was time to return. The night had grown chilly, and he insisted upon lending us rugs and wraps, which the men would bring back with them in the gig.

There was no suspicion of evil or doom in our thoughts as we wished him good-night and prosperity, and everything else that was good, in the time to come. Not a shadow of sadness lurked in his hearty and cheery "Good-bye!" as we parted from him and the *Serpent*—for ever.

She was to leave Torquay the next day for Plymouth; and the next day, as we came up from Dartmouth, and the train swept round the bay into the station, we saw a man-of-war steaming out to sea.



TOTNES.

"There goes the *Serpent*," said Broadley. "A good fellow is Ross. A better seaman or messmate I never fell across. I am glad he's got her."

But there came a day when that rejoicing was turned to sorrow and mourning. We all know the terrible story: it need not be repeated in all its harrowing details. For weeks afterwards we would wake up out of sleep with the whole scene passing vividly before us: the surging of the waves, the foundering of the ship, the cries of the dying as real and as visible as if we had been present at that awful moment.

Captain Ross was one of the last for whom such a fate would have been predicted—for whom it seemed possible. He was full of life and health and energy; one of the kindliest natures breathing; one of the most capable of men. He looked as though he bore a charmed life. But we knew how he would meet death. The bravery that had never deserted him would not forsake him in that last supreme hour. His sorrow and agony would be far more for those around him, over whom he held command, and for whom he felt responsible, than for himself.

And now to go back for a moment to the *Norham Castle* and a very different scene and time.

We had entered Dartmouth on the Wednesday, and all we have described was done then or at other times during our occasional visit to the neighbourhood. On the Friday we watched the good ship steam out of harbour on her prosperous voyage to the Cape, her full complement of passengers on board.

The greater part of them were Colonials who had been paying a visit to the old country. Right worthy people, with that fine flow of loud spirits which would be so terrible through the lingering days of a long voyage. On the whole we congratulated each other on our small and decorous party of two, as we turned into the quiet railway station at Kingswear. Before long we also had said good-bye to Dartmouth, and entered upon that really wonderful journey which lies between it and Exeter.

At Exeter we had ten minutes to wait; and H. Minor went round to invest in papers at the bookstall and buns in the refreshment room. I, deep in a thrilling romance, kept my seat. Suddenly the train moved off, and H. Minor had not returned.

"Stop, stop!" I cried in agony to the guard. "H. Minor is left behind, with no ticket and very little money. Stop the train, whatever the consequence."

"All right, sir," cried the guard, jumping on to the footboard. "Young gentleman came up at the last moment loaded with buns and papers. I put him into the first compartment handy. It contained two old ladies who have joined the Salvation Army. It's said they're a bit touched in the head, and have made over all their

property to the cause. I'm afraid the young gentleman will have a bad time of it."

I was afraid so too. The train steamed on, and at the next station —I think it was Taunton—I hastened out to the rescue. It was time. H. Minor was flushed and uncomfortable. The old ladies had accepted the buns and in return had tried to convert him to their own ways of thinking.

"A most promising youth, sir," they cried in chorus, whilst H. Minor sprang out and grasped my arm as if he would never again let it go. "He cannot do better than join the Salvation Army. He would blow the trumpet and beat the drum to perfection. If you only make plenty of noise you are sure to be popular. Noise, noise, noise; that is the keynote of the whole thing. It's quite beautiful."

We made the ladies a polite salutation and went back to our own compartment, unconquered. In due time we reached London; and the day came when H. Minor found his way back to the Hursts of Kent and the muscats of Alexandria. We will leave the reader to form his own opinion as to whether Chubb's locks proved a sufficient power to save Sampson's children from being lopped off "one by one and sometimes two by two"; merely concluding with the words of the poet who declared that, stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage.

ON THE DART.

THE DEFENCE AT RORKE'S DRIFT,

JAN. 22ND AND 23RD, 1879.

Recalled by the recent death (Feb. 10th, 1891) of one of the chief defenders,
MAJOR GONVILLE BROMHEAD, V.C.

Is the flower of valour wholly withered?
Is the age of heroes gone for aye?
Have we lost our ancient love of glory
'Midst the busy traffic of to-day?
Are we but a mean and bartering nation?
Is it "Each man for himself" alone?
Is the voice of duty dumb among us,
And the stainless soul of honour flown?

Backward glance to Zululand in action;
Read the answer in our noble slain;
Stand beside the Buffalo's swift current—
Hear it tell its thrilling tale again.
Has not Rorke's Drift made itself immortal?
Will its story ever be forgot?
Will not history proudly vaunt its praises—
Wave triumphant colours o'er the spot?

Hark! the tidings come when least expected:
"Dire defeat—the blood-stained foe at hand!"
Scarce is time to call the force together,
Marshal into place the little band,
Barricade the two defenceless houses,
Pierce the walls, set watch at ev'ry post,
Build a fence of bags and biscuit-boxes—
Feeble check to meet a conquering host!

Scarce is time—yet order is not wanting;
Prompt and skilful, each man takes his share;
Calm and dauntless, sees the savage legion
Rushing onward, with exultant air,
To surprise with overwhelming numbers
The unguarded little English hold.
Let them come! Our soldiers do not fear them;
Hearts of oak are they, with veins of gold.

Through long hours they fight on still unyielding ;
Strew the ground with hundreds of the foe ;
"Fearful odds" against them, know no terror—
Worthy heroes of the long-ago !
See them, when their hospital is blazing,
Bayonet in hand, defend the door ;
Carry out the sick 'midst closest peril—
Last to leave the place the gallant four.*

Quite encompassed, darkness closes o'er them,
Yet they keep their courage cool and high,
Never fire a random shot, nor falter
Till the dawn is reddening in the sky—
Till the enemy, retiring weary,
Leaves them free to right themselves once more,
View the ground, and strengthen the position,
Lest the danger still may not be o'er.

Needful caution ! On the neighbouring hill-sides
Lo ! the Zulus muster yet again :
One to thirty—through the night they've battled,
Can our men endure a further strain ?
Who may say ? The question waits no answer ;
Just in time Lord Chelmsford's troops appear ;
At the sight our dusky foe falls backward ;
Chard's repulse had taught them how to fear.

Chard ! a name to live in song and story—
Valiant, able, swift to see and do ;
Undismayed when hope had fairly vanished—
Noble leader of his noble few ;
Bromhead, too ! whom Chard delights to honour,
Hardly second in the pressing need,
Both alike may claim the laurel chaplet—
Proudest guerdon for the proudest deed.

Yes, your country chants aloud your praises,
Bold defenders of your post, and more ;
Scarce a hundred men, surprised, surrounded,
Driving back an army from our door ;
Chant your praises 'midst the muffled tolling
O'er your comrades' graves of death's sad bell ;
Crowns you, saviours of Natal ! still keeping
Crowns for deeds that later days shall tell.

* "Privates Williams, Hook, R. Jones and W. Jones, of the 24th Regiment, were the last four men to leave, holding the door-way against the Zulus with bayonets, their ammunition being quite expended."

Lieutenant Chard's Official Report.

THE STAR OF A SEASON.

By G. B. Stuart.

STELLA D'ARVILLE came, saw, or was seen—which is the passive, feminine form—and conquered society.

London has rarely seen such beauty as hers, presented in so attractive, so piquante a manner. Not only was she as charming, as witty and as naïve as she was beautiful, but she was produced unexpectedly by Lady Betty Weaver just at the moment when society was agog for something new.

Lady Betty was always doing odd things—once she had turned spiritualist, twice she had dyed her hair, all last season she had been a vegetarian, to the amusement of all the world except her "chef"—this year she had introduced a brand new eighteen-carat, first-water beauty. When people asked her whence Stella came: if she were a Suffolk d'Arville, or a Dorset d'Arville: if she were of Norman descent, as her perfect profile suggested, or of Huguenot origin, as her straight black eyebrows maintained: Lady Betty only laughed and answered: "That is my secret."

She had brought her to town when she arrived in Lowndes Square in February. Miss d'Arville had been presented at the second drawing-room, and invited to the first state ball. A certain eminent personage had asked who she was, and Lord Cranberry had pronounced her fit to be a duchess. As Lord Cranberry himself might reasonably expect to be a duke one day, his Grace of Quincetown having attained the ripe age of ninety-two, this verdict was thought to be as significant as it was correct. Such knowledge as Lord Cranberry possessed of the fairer sex was indeed power, and Stella d'Arville was an assured success from the instant that Lord Cranberry had spoken his opinion into the ever-ready ear of his friend Tom Todie.

It is astonishing how quickly success breeds success—before Miss d'Arville was herself aware of it, the Regent Street shops were full of enchanting articles de luxe which bore her name; the "d'Arville mantelet" and the "Stella pocket-handkerchief" were rapidly disseminated over the known world. Everybody was humming—or trying to hum, for tune was not its strong point—the "Star of the Season" waltz, dedicated by permission to Miss Stella d'Arville, by Percy Boomerangue, Esq., Mus. Bac. Lady Betty Weaver was delighted, and constantly said to her protégée in private: "My dear, you are the cleverest girl I have ever known; how you do it, I don't know; you can be a duchess to-morrow, if you choose."

What was it that Miss d'Arville did, of which Lady Betty protested

such entire ignorance? She only behaved exactly like other young ladies—talked, sang, danced, rode in the park, acted in private theatricals of a public nature, held stalls at royal bazaars, and otherwise followed the quiet, unassuming life of a daughter of London society; but she did all with a verve, a charm, a freshness which were all her own, and astonished and delighted more people than old Lady Betty.

She was rich too; that was such a comfort. Of course, one always feels great sympathy for the poor, but poor people in society are a great bore. Now, Stella d'Arville had brought her own horse and groom when she came to Lowndes Square; she had a French maid, who dressed her in her simple but exquisite toilettes, and attended her on visits to country houses, and sat up for her, with hot beef-tea ready, night after night of the season; and she gave liberally to charities. There was proof positive of her being quite well-to-do. She lived at the rate of about a thousand a-year, Tom Todie had computed (Major Todie is of a Scotch family, and knows a great deal about the aristocracy and the smart circles), and happening to mention this to Lord Cranberry, his lordship had observed: "And quite enough, too, for any woman to have of her own," which pregnant remark had been instantly added to the current history of Miss Stella d'Arville's career.

As Jack Churchmouse said ruefully once, "I've known Cranberry tart, and I've had to take Cranberry sauce—(there were ladies present, but he'd better not try it on again!)—but Cranberry dulcet, smiling, paternal, I have not known till now; and what it bodes I don't like to think!"

He did know quite well, and it cost him many a bitter pang, for all his laughing, for he, like Lord Cranberry and everybody else, was head over ears in love with Stella; only with this difference, that poor Jack had a heart to offer her and a considerable number of empty pockets in his numerous smart unpaid-for coats, and the others had riches, titles, position, all sorts of valuable things, unencumbered with troublesome physical organs.

What was the good of Jack fluttering round his divinity as he did? Lady Betty was a kind of aunt or second cousin of his mother, but they had never been particularly intimate till Stella came to Lowndes Square, and the young hussar discovered that Knightsbridge was exactly half-way between Aldershot and all the other places in the world to which he might be called—notably on the direct route for his paternal home in Essex, and indeed an excellent rest-house under all circumstances. Of course, when Lady Whim's theatricals were going on for the benefit of the Hindoo Widows Fund, and Stella d'Arville appeared as an "Arabian Nights'" princess, with gold sequins in her hair, and sylvan draperies arranged by Potts Boileau, R.A., Jack managed to get "taken on," as an Ethiop Guard, and blacked himself conscientiously for three nights running,

just for the privilege of holding back the curtains for the Princess to pass through, and making one of her court afterwards at supper, with a very smudgy face.

All this was perfectly well-known to his intimates, but that he should think seriously of pitting himself against such wooers as Cranberry, and Marchpane, and Fitz-Dodo—the idea was absurd!

It was one day, at rehearsal at Lady Whim's, that a curate strayed into the chattering, laughing group of young men and girls who were waiting to be called on to the stage: some of them were being put through their part separately, and the rest of the performers were off duty for a little.

How the clergyman got in nobody knew; he was a shy, nervous young parson, in shabby black clothes—perhaps he had come about a subscription or a special case, for Lady Whim is very charitable, and does not confine her sympathies to the Hindoo widows. He stood in a corner and looked exquisitely uncomfortable.

Presently Stella d'Arville observed him and, in her kindly, gracious way, drew him into the conversation. "It was as if a goddess spoke and there was sorrow no more" for the young Curate, who straightway became valiant and almost eloquent. The talk had only been about some silk embroideries for which someone had paid a fancy price at Christie's. Suddenly the Curate, emboldened by Stella's sweet patronage, broke out into an incoherent, half-frightened, wholly pathetic description of the water-side parish he had that morning left; the flooded cellars, in which women and little children crouched without fire or food; the loafing, hungry men at the dock gates; the dire, grimy, squalid surroundings, where "sweetness and light" were only exemplified to the inhabitants by the warmth and flare of the frequent gin-palaces.

He stopped breathless and ashamed in the middle of a sentence, dropping the end of the Indian silk which he had been grasping all the while; it was all very true and terrible to him, but it was quite inexcusable that he should have spoken of such things and in such a manner to a strange party of ladies and gentlemen in a fashionable drawing-room.

Stella was equal to the occasion. "Who has a hat?" she was asking; "I am going to make a collection for your poor parish." And round the circle she went, dropping in her own five-pound note first, as if it had been half-a-crown.

Some of them liked it and some didn't. It was an ease of mind to some, who had been uncomfortably stirred by the parson's story; others gave because giving in good company is a pleasant and stimulating luxury; Jack Churchmouse dropped a sovereign into the hat, and wished savagely he could have produced a fiver like Lord Cranberry, whose little roll of paper fluttered in beside Miss d'Arville's note. To each and all she gave the same hearty, smiling thanks, for Jack's sovereign with the rest; then she made the clergyman sit

down, and giving him her dainty little cambric handkerchief to hold, poured the money into it. Twenty-three pounds ten in all.

"We must make it twenty-five," she said to the astonished Curate, pulling out her purse again. "I have only a solitary sovereign. Mr. Churchmouse, will you lend me ten shillings and pay my hansom home, by-and-by? We can't let this gentleman take away odd money."

Jack was in the seventh heaven, though his raptures were kept within due bounds, and only betrayed themselves by a quiet flash of the eyes. Not so the Curate's. His wonder, bewilderment and gratitude knew no bounds, and tried to find expression in wild words, which were choked by his emotion and by violent and impartial hand-graspings of anyone within reach. When he came to Stella d'Arville he struggled in his waistcoat pocket for a card: "You don't know anything about me, not even my name," he stammered; "I may be an impostor, for all you know, but I'm not, and we—I and my poor people—will never forget you and this day's work, and will pray for you ——"

"Nonsense, nonsense, my good sir," said Lord Cranberry, interposing; "we were all delighted to follow Miss d'Arville's capital suggestion and give you our mites."

The bell rang, and Stella and Jack Churchmouse had to go on; she took the Curate's card — "The Rev. Augustine Pryor, St. Agatha's Mission, Poplar." Jack shook the wizened little cleric, with his spare frame and thin cheeks, warmly by the hand; the hussar looked like a hearty young denizen of another planet beside the undersized, overworked Londoner.

"Give me your card too, if you will, and take mine in exchange. I'm very glad to have met you," he said pleasantly. "I'm a poor devil myself, and can feel for those men you spoke of. I'd like to come down and talk to some of them about enlisting."

And then the call-bell rang again and the episode ended.

When the season drew to its close it was generally known that Marchpane and Fitz-Dodo and half-a-dozen others had proposed to Stella d'Arville and had been refused; and it was pretty plain for whose proposal the young lady reserved her assent.

The Duke of Quincetown, who, by quietly indulging his eccentricities, had reached the respectable age of ninety-two without a day's illness, succumbed to a chill, brought about by his untiring personal efforts in the hayfields at Quinceborough, where he had a model farm. Naturally his nephew and heir, Lord Cranberry, had to put aside for a few weeks all private concerns for the responsibilities of his new position; but it was understood—Todie had it from the new Duke himself—that as soon as things were en train at home, his Grace intended to follow Lady Betty Weaver and her young friend to Aix les Bains, whither they had gone for the month of September.

And it was in one of the little vine-draped lanes above the road

which leads to the Queen's newly-acquired property, that the Duke found his loadstar, as he poetically called her, after dismissing Valérie, the French maid, to a discreet distance, and asking permission to seat himself on a stone beside Miss d'Arville. Miss d'Arville was sketching the deep green valley that lies below the road, the white cluster of Aix town, and the Savoy hills, with their purple lights behind.

"I daresay you can guess why I have come," said the Duke, as a beginning.

"I know you have gone through trouble and anxiety lately, and you must require change of air," responded Stella, demurely.

"Not at all! My only reason for leaving England at this juncture, when every hour brings some fresh responsibility ——"

"Then it must be rheumatism," interrupted Stella. "I saw old Lady Lithia Waters this morning—her case is a positive miracle. She has been here about three weeks, and I assure you ——"

"I assure you," said the Duke, rather testily, "I don't know what rheumatism is; I am suffering from quite another complaint." Here he sighed heavily. "One for which the remedy is more precious, more difficult to obtain."

"Then you must ask Lady Betty to prescribe for you. She is quite a wonderful doctor, you know. And now I think I must be going; will you kindly call Valérie, my maid, to put my painting together?"

"Miss d'Arville—Stella! I *have* consulted Lady Betty, and she has sent me here. The malady I suffer from is love for yourself; the remedy is with you! You have led me to believe that my affection is not entirely unreciprocated. You have, I understand, refused several eligible offers, and I venture to hope from this——" He stopped, eloquently holding out his ducal hand with a gesture which he had found effective in the House.

"My dear Lord Cranberry," said Stella, forgetting the dukedom in her candid hurry, "I refused two or three offers before I left London merely because I did not love the gentlemen who made them. I don't love you either, and I should never, if I could have prevented it, have allowed this proposal to take place. But I did not know that you were in earnest, and fancied that when you succeeded to the dukedom of Quincetown you would forget all about me. However, I hope that mistake is not a very fatal one. I thank you for your offer to a penniless girl; it was noble and disinterested, as the chivalry of a duke should be; but there are thousands of ladies who are fitted to be your wife and your duchess, as I could never be. Shall we be turning home now? Valérie can follow with my things."

"A penniless girl?" echoed the Duke. "I thought they said that you had a thousand a-year of your own?" His arms fell limply by his side; the gestures which his constituency admired so heartily failed him here.

"So I had," Stella replied, smiling; "but only for one year. Indeed, London life has made such inroads on my fortune of a thousand pounds that it is almost at an end, and as soon as I can leave Lady Betty in good hands, I must disappear into the country from whence I came; my season is almost over."

"A thousand pounds for one year only! I don't understand," gasped the Duke feebly.

"Then, as it is all a matter of pounds, shillings and pence, I will explain to your Grace," said Stella, her voice sounding with a ring of contempt which made the nobleman quail. "My father was the Vicar of a little country village, and when he died I became in earnest what I had often been in pastime, a village schoolmistress. I had dreams and ambitions above my calling. Lady Betty Weaver took me up; she had been a friend of my mother, and they had been intimate until my mother's death. Suddenly another relation of my mother died and left me a thousand pounds. Instead of investing it carefully and living happily ever after on forty pounds interest, I conceived the idea of spending it on a stock of worldly experience. Lady Betty assisted me, and brought me up to town to make my bargain. I have had seven months' experience of your world and, though I have spent nearly all my money, I consider I have had my money's worth. I have seen what is called society, and know how eminently unsociable it can be. I have tested nobility, and know the difference between real silver and electro. I have seen real sterling goodness quietly going about its business, and ostentatious charity prating of its mite. I shall go back to the country very soon, and probably teach school again. I have plenty to teach and plenty to think about this winter. I have told you all my story, and if you like to tell it to Major Todie, and all the world hears its details, you are most welcome; only do not forget to mention that the Vicar's daughter said, 'No, thank you,' when you asked her to become your duchess. Valérie, I am ready to go back."

Lady Betty's lovely young friend disappeared rather suddenly from Aix society, and her place was taken by her ladyship's niece, one of the Cambridgeshire Webbe-Weavers, a hard-featured young woman, who stalked by her elderly relation's Bath-chair with the determined air of a gaoleress.

There were many rumours afloat concerning the beautiful Miss d'Arville; some said there had been a fierce scene between her and her chaperon on the dismissal of the Duke of Quincetown; others, that she had betaken herself and her colossal fortune into a French convent, in disappointment on receiving no offer at all from his Grace; others, again, that she had no fortune and was not so wonderfully pretty after all.

The fact remains that she had retired from the companionship of Lady Betty, and Elgiva Webbe-Weaver reigned in her stead—

very much to the mental and physical discomfort of the poor dear old lady. When she died about Christmas-time, the Cambridgeshire family were disgusted to find that she had only left Elgiva a hundred pounds for mourning expenses, and the bronze Mercury out of her library. Jack Churchmouse, who was away in Ireland with his regiment, was sent for just at the last, when the old lady suddenly expressed a desire to see him; but he arrived too late to learn her wishes, though she pressed his hand and looked up at him with questioning, sharp eyes; he could almost imagine what she wanted to say, and he nodded his head vigorously to give her satisfaction.

When the will was opened there was, besides Elgiva's legacy, a thousand a-year for Jack, and a thousand a-year in trust for Lady Betty's dear young friend Stella d'Arville, to whom she left this remembrance as an expiation of a "very much regretted fit of temper." The Webbe-Weavers went about saying that old Lady Betty had been quite crazy of late years, and that they intended to dispute the will; but Boreham, Q.C., who had been one of her ladyship's oldest friends and advisers, told them bluntly that she had been as sane as he was—and no one dared to doubt Boreham's sanity.

In the meantime, all trace of Stella d'Arville had disappeared.

One afternoon in April, just a year after Lady Whim's celebrated theatricals for the Hindoo Widows Fund, Jack Churchmouse and his friend Augustine Pryor were strolling into a Devonshire village which they had marked as a suitable stopping-place for one night of their week's walking tour.

Jack had been unsettled of late, and had sold his commission; he had taken to loafing about the country in an apparently aimless way, eschewing London and all his old haunts, though he sometimes dropped in for a pipe and a chat at St. Agatha's Clergy House, where the Curate, more shrivelled and wizened than ever, still worked, and hoped, and prayed for his people. And this Easter he had had his way, and had brought the little parson for a country outing.

They were tramping through an out-of-the-way corner of West Devon, pushing through budding lanes unknown to Londoners or Primrose Dames, lighting on strange, still old villages, and silent churchyards, whose headstones were buried up to their chins in the grass. The Rev. Augustine had a fancy for the churches, but Jack generally slipped round by the schools, caught a white-haired lass or lad, and for the lucre of sixpence put them through a catechism about lessons and teachers; but never yet, in all his wanderings and inquiries, had he lit on Stella. She had disappeared just at the moment when it seems that circumstances were bringing them together, and "the desire of the moth for the star" was within the possibility of realisation.

Jack had been questioning a schoolgirl just now, while Pryor went

on to seek the post-office and inquire for letters. He had elicited that the schoolmistress was a widow, "tidy an' stout," his informant admitted when asked what she was like, and by name Mrs. Ambler: it was hopeless work, and he gave the sixpence and dismissed the child rather shortly.

"Look at this!" cried the Curate, coming swiftly across the narrow street to the bridge on whose parapet Jack was dismally dangling his long legs. "I wanted a postal order for one of my—for nothing particular—and she signed it as postmistress—you know I have only seen her once before but I'm almost certain—and, you see, here is her signature 'S. d'Arvill,'" thrusting the order into Jack's hand upside down.

Jack looked at it for one second only; it was a hand he knew well, though the name was otherwise spelt than he had been used to spell it; then he sprang across the street, and into the post-office.

Some parts of this story I picked up from Major Todie and the general public, but the more reliable details were given me by the Rev. Augustine Pryor at the wedding-breakfast of Jack Churchmouse and Stella d'Arville.

"UN CHANT D'AMOUR."

Hie to the moorland, my sweet Bonnie Leslie,
For the sun is in heaven, the gorse on the lea,
And the scent of the wild purple sprigs of the heather
Is wasting its sweetness in watching for thee.

The dove in the pine-wood coos, sweet Bonnie Leslie,
The wren in the thicket chirps low to her mate;
And the blackbird is trilling of spring-time and nesting,
But still, Bonnie Leslie, I sigh and I wait.

Oh, fair is the moorland, and bright is the ocean,
Where the sea-gull dips downward in sun-flashing spray;
And sweet is the dim copse of rose-pointed larches,
And the wind-whispered chime of the blue-bells of May.

Hie to the moorland, my sweet Bonnie Leslie,
In the covert is crouching the startled brown deer;
And the birds in the brake are still crying and calling,
But the sunlight is shadow, when thou art not here.

C. E. C. Weigall.

HIC JACET.

A Sketch from our Village.

By Ada M. Trotter.

A PASTORAL; an idyl; nothing more. Sunshine and storm; the babbling of a brook; the scent of apple blossoms; the whetstone on the scythe. Later in the year, the sickle, and—the harvest.

And a deep current of life, joy and suffering amid all.

There is a public-house near the village cross, an old building, lighted upstairs by tiny dormer windows. Its sign, "The Spout," creaks above the doorway. Beside it is a yard strewn with logs of wood and deal planks, instrumental for service to the living and the last service to the dead. In the corner is a pig-stye, interesting spot, prospective of the best pork in the West-country. As a matter of routine, first the pig-killer, then the village aroused by hideous yells, then an impromptu bonfire, attended by boys of all ages and sizes; from this moment, when the pigs emerge scathed, "swinged," they are open to public opinion, and the judges of swine's flesh come and go. The pigs are left to the owners, John, Tom and Charlotte Powell.

What! Is it possible? Introduce the pigs to notice before the owners!

There is reason for so doing, since it is imperative that the surroundings of three such quaint figures should be familiar. See the house, pig-stye, yard and orchard, where the very fruit-trees share the disposition to vagary of form, and one is prepared for the appearance of the owners.

Stand forth, John Powell: a short man, thou, of rough skin, gnarly as the cider fruit in the orchard; of sober countenance; hair, whiskers and beard of iron grey. Nature hath disposed thy limbs to be short and thick-set; thine own love of ease, or the flesh of thy young porkers, adding superabundance of fat. For thy clothing is no tailor responsible. The thrifty care of Charlotte, thy wife, invents both pattern and style, with a result inconceivably original. She is thy barber likewise, John. With care she fits the pudding-basin on thy head and clips around the rim.

And Tom, thy brother.

Nature made him after thy pattern. A little more rubicund, the face; a stronger development of muscle in the arms, for Tom has been a fighter in his youth. He is reticent in speech; otherwise—thy twin.

And Charlotte, thy wife. Impersonation, she, of thrift, of power, of cleanliness. Her form is portly, her dress spare; her blue cotton

gown a miracle of triangular patches, inserted at various dates. Some have lost their pristine hue, and the gown shades from deepest blue to white. If her bared arms show muscular strength, doth not the village drunkard profit by her determination that the "Spout Inn" shall be quiet and respectable? Dares he to drink a glass of ale too many for his mental equipoise, and Charlotte's arms hold him in leash; a moment later and the door is shut on him.

Outside the public is a rushing fall of water. It comes from the hillside. Folks call it "The Spout." The village ablutions are performed here.

Five o'clock in the morning. The mowers pass down the village to the fields, carrying scythes on their backs and whetstones in their belts. The cider keg is slung across the shoulder, ready for the thirsty labourer.

Dew weighs down the grasses on the wayside; birds twitter as the sunbeams touch the trees. The mowers pause at "The Spout," grouping themselves lazily on the stone slab before the door. Charlotte brings out the blue pint mugs of cider, then stands, arms akimbo, listening to the drowsy talk. One suggests an idea; others assent; some are silent, leaning heavily against the portal, ears open, turning eyes that see not to the grassy meads, where the silver current trails its way over the quicksands of the Severn.

The two Pritchards are the spokesmen. They are twin brothers, giants both. They work together, moving their scythes in even sweeps, rhythmic with the grace of perfect knowledge. They are the two finest, strongest men in the village.

"She baint much to look at."

"Um," said Tom.

"They say she'll make a grand singer."

"Well, she may: her family always *was* fine singers."

"She have sung in the choir ever since she was a little lass. That's a good training," said John.

"And she's a good daughter," from Charlotte.

"No good never comes of public singing," said Tom. "That's what I do say."

"I heerd she was going to It'ly!"

"To It'ly!" chorus. "To It'ly!" And all eyes rest on the Berkely shore: perhaps It'ly also may be "cross the water." Further than this imagination cannot take them. It is the climax. In silence the blue pint cups are laid aside; the mowers move on.

"Um," says Tom. It is the expression of his opinion, not carelessly given.

"Breakfast is ready," from Charlotte.

The two men go indoors.

The village folk were astir; doors opened, half-dressed children sat on the doorsteps or rolled in the dusty road. The men came

to the spout to wash; they put their soap on the stone coping, and their heads under the waterfall, emerging rosy and exhilarated. The fresh breeze sent the dust in tiny whirls over the garden palings. Then women and children brought their buckets for water. All lingered in lazy fashion to talk.

Far down beside the Severn whirled the train, the instrument by whose means this sleepy existence should be banished for ever. Yet not even the contemplative Tom could see this.

Morning has passed; the hot sun has dried up the dew-drops on the grasses.

Down in the hayfield the mowers move on with steady sweep. The long bents fall with every movement of the scythes. Women follow with rakes and pitchforks; the hay is tossed deftly. A girl leads, following the rhythmic movements of the Pritchards with easy grace. She has a plain but sensible countenance; her dainty sun-bonnet, neat and cleanly appearance, proclaiming her of superior mould to her rustic companions.

"Priscilla!" calls the farmer.

"Sir." She pauses and turns; her sun-bonnet hides a sudden quivering of the lips.

"My mother wants you at the house."

A moment's hesitation; the rake is thrown down; Priscilla quietly walks towards the house. The farmer keeps pace with her; he is a gentleman in manner, has had a plain education at Gloucester Crypt School. As a lad he had been a chorister at the cathedral, and is a connoisseur of music in a quiet way. As they walk on together he is spokesman, giving Priscilla good advice as to her future. Then, as he turned back to the fields, said cordially:

"But enough of advice. Of course you will study diligently."

He did not look into the face hidden in the sun-bonnet. It might have warned him of the danger of playing with fire; he hardly realised that his mother's favourite was a child no longer.

Priscilla lingered in the garden amongst the sweet peas, trying to still her agitation. Presently, Mrs. Pierce called to her. "Come in, my child; I want you to help me in the linen room."

Then as Priscilla ran upstairs:

"What shall I do without you? My memory fails me so; and you will be far away. I want a list of the linen in the press to give to John's wife when he marries."

"When he marries!"

As the old lady turned in surprise, Priscilla bent over the linen press.

"It is warm here, in the sunshine," cried the girl, raising her flushed face. "May I open the window?"

The day passed slowly by in the linen room. It was tedious work. Through the open lattice came the perfume of the sweet peas,

to mingle with the lavender sprinkled amidst the snowy piles in the press.

In the house was the peace of still life; out of doors, the sound of the whetstone on the scythes; the solemn quack of ducks in the poultry yard. How familiar and yet how strange these everyday voices to Priscilla.

At sun-down she was free, and set forth with fleet step to her mother's cottage. It was twilight as she came to the brook-side; the air was warm and still. The willows bent their branches over the lapping waters; some of the leaves were swept under the wavelets. Far away in the river bed, the tide brought its burden of merchant vessels; a brisk wind filled the sails. Nearer, the cows sauntered back to the fields, rest and peace in every sulky step they trod.

This was the outside world. Priscilla saw with eyes that noted all unconsciously. She was fighting a battle with herself, stirred to the depths with an anguish which seemed to tear at her heart-strings, and rend them in twain. The tumult within would not be stilled, and as the Park clock struck eight, the stricken girl rose and went home. Her mother, image of sweet content, watched for her in the garden, a bunch of sweet peas, sweetbrier, honeysuckle and pinks in her hand.

"Listen, Priscilla, the nightingale is singing!"

A rustle from the orchard trees; overhead a light wind amidst the drifting clouds, and a faint glimmering of stars in the dim twilight sky. Then came the burst of song, sweet and clear. Priscilla would never forget that evening.

The next Sunday was to be Priscilla's last in the West-country, and people came from neighbouring villages to hear her sing. The bell tolled for the evening service, and as the girl started forth with her mother, Mr. Pierce joined them and walked to the churchyard gate.

"Mother sent you this posy," said he, handing the old-fashioned blossoms to Priscilla's care.

They were early, and sat down on an old tombstone to await the calling bell.

"1470," said Mr. Pierce, poking the moss from the inscription, and reading "Hic Jacet." "There is a cross, but the name is gone."

"What does 'Hic Jacet' signify?" asked Priscilla.

"Here lies; on a tombstone, to my idea, it means buried hopes or sorrows. It is like a stanza of a poem, suggestive too of higher flights than earthly ambition can attain."

They fell into thoughtful silence. Then the tolling bell began to ring. Priscilla lingered behind her companions, the last bell had rung its vibrant call ere she took her seat in the choir.

It was the time for the Anthem. The organist had chosen "As Pants the Hart," for the sake of the soprano solo.

"As pants the hart for cooling streams" rang out in clear tones;

the old church echoed back the intense, thrilling prayer, "so panteth my soul for Thee, O God." "So panteth my soul for Thee" seemed breathed amongst the mouldering archways. The sun shone in with evening glory; the choir was radiant in the flaming hues of purple and gold.

Opposite Priscilla was a coloured window, representing Christ and the Apostles; the beatitudes were inscribed around the archway. As the old Vicar droned his sermon, the girl read one quite apart in the pictured faces. And written above all, two words pregnant with meaning filled her heart with a new strength, "Hic Jacet."

"It is possible," she breathed earnestly. "Hic Jacet; one can bury the follies of the past."

The organ pealed dismissal; Priscilla found herself under the shadowy yew, flowers in hand. Here she laid her precious blossoms, buried from sight, and traced "Hic Jacet" lightly on the crumbling earth, and under the words laid her cross. Then, triumphant as only one who conquers self can be, she ran home to her mother, to sit at her feet this last evening, and to listen to the nightingale making melody in the woodlands.

Ten years later.

John and Tom Powell, dressed in their Sunday best, stand amidst a group at their door. Charlotte, too, is there, ready to lock up, for, strange to say, they are all bound for Gloucester to-day.

"*I* say as it's a credit to the village," said Tom.

"Ay, ay! And so good as she be, keeping her mother like a queen," put in Charlotte, briefly.

"Here be the Pierces; of course they'll be there," said John. "Young Pierce, he was first to find out what a voice she had."

"Well, I had a letter from the old woman," said Charlotte. "She says where Priscilla goes, she goes; and silk and satin gowns to her back, and—a private carriage."

"Lawk-a-mercy!" from the astounded group.

"Time for we to start," said Tom, locking the door of the public-house.

For this was the week of the meeting of the Triennial Choirs at Gloucester, and the solos were to be taken by Priscilla, whose reverent singing in Oratorio had made her a special favourite.

The cathedral was densely crowded, for "The Messiah" has an especial attraction for our brother of Wales; but no one present was so enthralled with interest as the folks from the village in the West-country, who, well placed, awaited the appearance of the singers, breathlessly.

Suddenly Mr. Pierce whispered, "There she is."

Priscilla took her seat with the calm of perfect confidence in her own powers. She glanced along the rows, and singled out familiar faces, recognising her old friends with a smile.

"She is very plain," said old Mrs. Pierce, a little disappointed that beauty had not followed the development of the genius of song.

"How richly she is dressed; and oh, she has a beautiful expression," said young Mrs. Pierce to her husband.

"It always improved when she sang," he replied. "How quiet and composed she is; no traces of the rustic about her."

"Rustic! after her education abroad," laughed the old lady. "It is we, now, my son, who are the rustics."

Mr. Pierce smiled, but as he looked from the platform to his own party, the comparison was obviously true.

Then Priscilla rose. There was a moment of intense expectation, then her voice thrilled in recitative. Perfect, perfect at last, flexible, sweet and expressive, "a voice to dream of," said young Mrs. Pierce.

Priscilla's success was undoubted; her praises rang amongst the crowd that left the cathedral after the glorious hour was past. Then came the concert in the town-hall in the evening. Priscilla appeared, clad in shining amber-coloured robes, a new being to her village friends. Still, her singing was so pure, so fresh, that Mr. Pierce had courage to carry out his determination to try to see her after the concert was over. "Is this in truth," he asked himself, "the girl who used to turn the hay in the meadows?"

Priscilla, the centre of a room full of cultured people desirous to be introduced to her, saw a rustic farmer on the outskirts of the crowd; she moved towards him, her amber robes rustling after her, quiet dignity pervading her movements.

The Pierces stood silent, shy and constrained, all eyes were turned upon them. Priscilla in a few words set them at ease; her manner was charming in its simplicity. Young Mrs. Pierce fell in love with her, urging her to stay with them when the festival was over.

"We will come, my mother and I," smiled Priscilla. "We are never separated," she said.

Thus Priscilla returned, overwhelmed with honours, to her native place. She went and came amongst the village folk in her old simple fashion. Yet her greatest pleasure was to wander alone in the meadows, to visit her mother's old cottage and garden, or sit with Mrs. Pierce amongst the hollyhocks in the farm garden. On Sunday she took her old seat in the choir, rewarded for the pleasure she gave by the uplifting to her own spirit that came from the Sermon on the Mount, so oddly carven about the arches of the coloured window.

And as she paused by the old bowed yew tree, the words "Hic Jacet" passed her lips.

"Hic Jacet!" said Mr. Pierce; "where do you see that?"

"Everywhere throughout the universe," she replied, softly. "Everywhere where there are human hearts."

Next day Priscilla went back into the world again.

IN TIME OF HARVEST.

THROUGH the valley and the upland,
O'er the brown deep-furrowed mead,
When the year was in its childhood
Went the Sower, sowing seed.

From the chilly break of morning,
To the setting of the sun,
Still he laboured, never resting,
'Till the long day's work was done.

Then he pray'd the great Life-Giver—
"Thine the fruitage is alone,
Therefore send, O Lord, Thy blessing
On the fields that I have sown.

"Not for me to see the issue,
Finished is this work of mine,
One shall plant, and others water,
But the increase, Lord, is Thine."

So he went his way, and Spring-time
Came with soft and balmy rain,
And the glorious suns of Summer
Shone upon the hill and plain.

Till at last the fragrant herbage
Decked the upland and the wold,
And in all the laughing valleys
Waved a rippling sea of gold.

"See," the people cried, rejoicing,
"See the end of all our fears!
For this rich abundant harvest
Doth surpass all former years!"

To the hungry far-off cities
Were the welcome tidings borne,
And the gleaners sang for gladness
As they gathered up the corn.

"Look!" the reapers cried, exulting,
"At the wealth the sickle yields!"
None perchance, save God, remembered
Who it was that sowed the fields!

Blessed of God, the earth made fruitful,
Blessed the people in their need;
Yet more deeply blessed the labour
Of the hand that sowed the seed.

Yea, and in the last great Harvest
By the Angels gathered in,
When the Son of Man in Glory
Shall His final Triumph win;

When within the heavenly garners
Safe are stored the precious ears—
Love's rich fruitage, slowly ripened
Through the lapse of countless years—

Then the Sower as a Reaper
Shall have glory of his own:
He shall surely come rejoicing
With the sheaves that he has sown.

CHRISTIAN BURKE.

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